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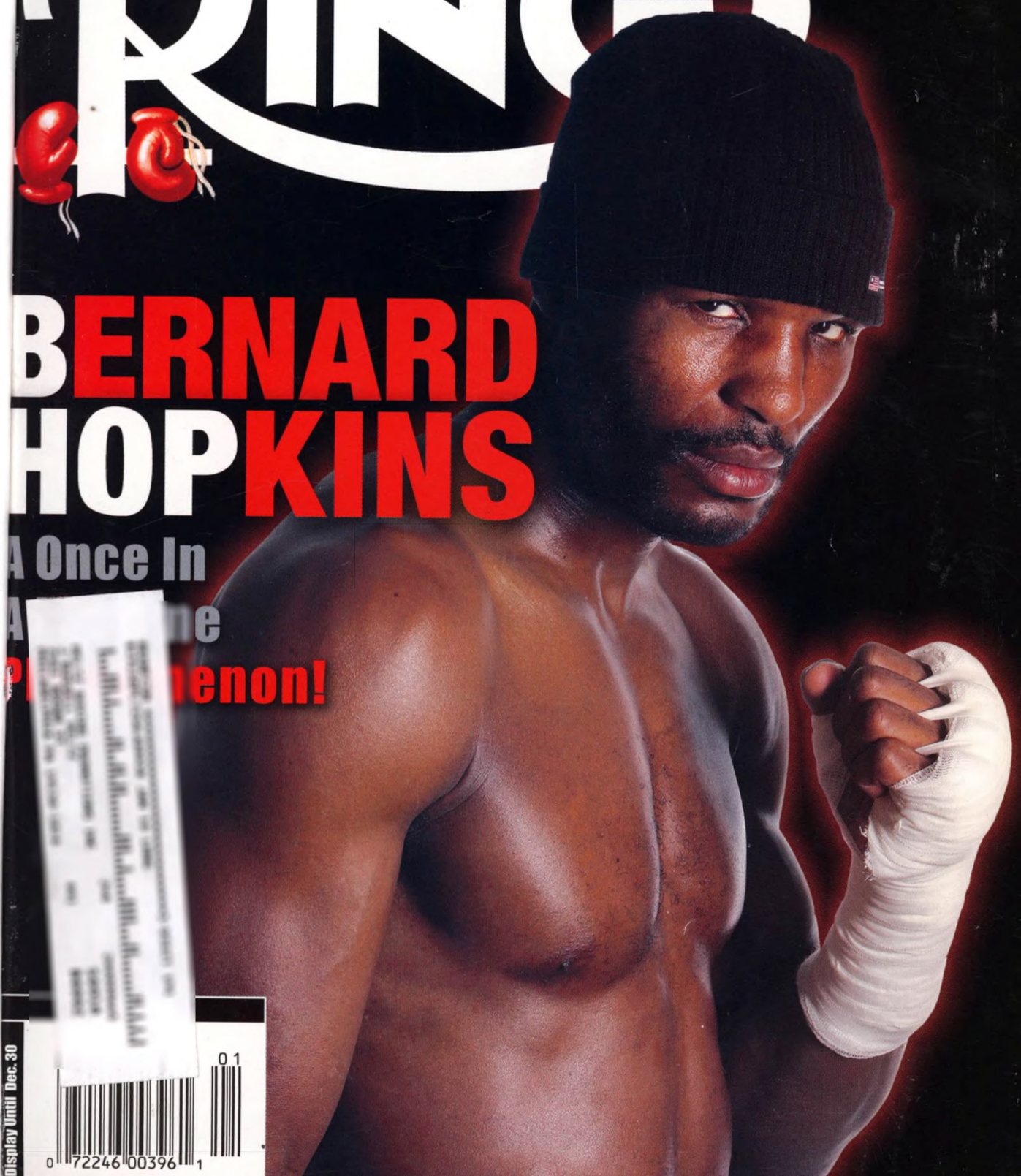

BERNARD HOPKINS

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Volume 88, No. 1 January 2009

The Ring

The Road Where Past And Present Intersect

Visions of middleweights past danced in my head as I aimed my trusty Honda through the early-morning darkness, away from Atlantic City, bound for Philadelphia. I had just watched homeboy Bernard Hopkins rise from the dead through the mastery of his art, and magic was clearly afoot.

Old memories came alive the way Hopkins had a few hours earlier, when he cast off the burden of his years and permanently erased any doubts that there was a pugilistic genius in our midst. Poor Kelly Pavlik, the reigning middleweight champion of the world, was just the canvas upon which the 43-year-old throwback had painted the masterpiece of his autumn.

True, Hopkins isn't fighting as a middleweight anymore, but it's where he made his bones, established his identity, and spent his physical prime.

Growing up in Philadelphia, it was impossible not to be enamored of the 160-pound division. But even before that, back when I was a boy living in England, I knew all about Sugar Ray Robinson and Randy Turpin. My father and grandfather made sure of that.

When we got to the United States and purchased our first television set, a whole new world of middleweight heroes opened up to me, a world populated by the likes of Dick Tiger, Gene Fullmer, and Ruben "Hurricane" Carter. Meanwhile, down at the old Philadelphia Arena at 45th and Market Streets, you could see Joey Giardello, George Benton, and Jesse Smith defending their turf against the best 160-pounders in the world.

Later, I was privileged to play a small role in what is often thought of as the golden age of Philadelphia middleweights, covering the likes of Eugene "Cyclone" Hart, Willie "The Worm" Monroe, Bobby "Boogaloo" Watts, and the grizzled alpha male of that formidable pack, Bennie Briscoe.

Back then you could play the six-degrees-of-separation game with these guys: Robinson fought Fullmer, who fought Tiger, who fought Giardello, who fought Benton, who fought Briscoe. And it doesn't stop there. Briscoe fought Hart, who fought Monroe and Watts, etc. etc.

Then there was a lull, a dark period for Philly middleweights, illuminated briefly by Frank "The Animal" Fletcher, but otherwise bereft of anyone worthy of comparison with his predecessors.

Although it took a lot longer than it should have for everybody to realize the obvious, the advent of Hopkins marked the end of the drought. Now, as the accomplishment and accolades continue to grow, he may ultimately be remembered as the best of them all.

There is no direct link between B-Hop and the legendary middleweights of my youth, but the cosmic connection seemed very real as the ghosts of the past rode shotgun that night: Hopkins had thrashed Pavlik in the very same building where Giardello upset Tiger for the middleweight championship back in '65. Like Giardello, Hopkins was supposed to be over the hill, and like his fellow Philadelphian, he upset the odds and proved the pundits wrong.

There is also a correlation between Hopkins and Tiger: Like Hopkins, Tiger was the former middleweight and light heavyweight champion when he defeated the reigning middleweight champion (Nino Benvenuti) in a non-title fight he was supposed to lose.

Coincidence? Karma? History repeating itself? Who knows?

But as the first light of dawn crept into the skyline and my journey neared its end, the memories receded, leaving me with the reassuring feeling that maybe the road really does go on forever, and the middleweight magic never ends—at least not in Philadelphia.

But even if that was only a figment of my weary imagination, I knew for sure how lucky I am to have been along for the ride.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

FOUNDER
Nathaniel S. Fleischer
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PUBLISHER
Stuart M. Saks

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Nigel Collins

MANAGING EDITOR
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William Dettloff

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
Kenneth J. Gudaitis

CIRCULATION SERVICES
David Tyler

ADVERTISING INQUIRIES
Robert Gasparri
(213) 233-2952
sepub@sepublications.com

SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES
Sports and Entertainment
Publications, LLC
P.O. Box 529
Mt. Morris, IL 61054-0529
1-800-846-6438
custsrvcsep@sepublications.com

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[Opening Shot]

Eye Sore

WBA featherweight titlist Chris John (right) required 70 stitches to close wounds below his right eye and above his left eye after gutting out a unanimous decision over Hiroyuki Enoki in Tokyo. After being released from the hospital, John said that the previously unbeaten challenger was as tough as the man from whom he took the title, Juan Manuel Marquez.

PHOTO BY TORU YAMANAKA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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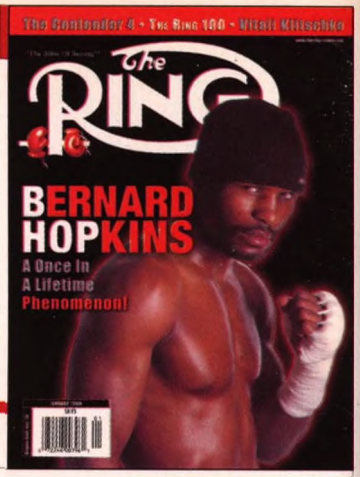

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Cover Design by **Joseph Rogan**

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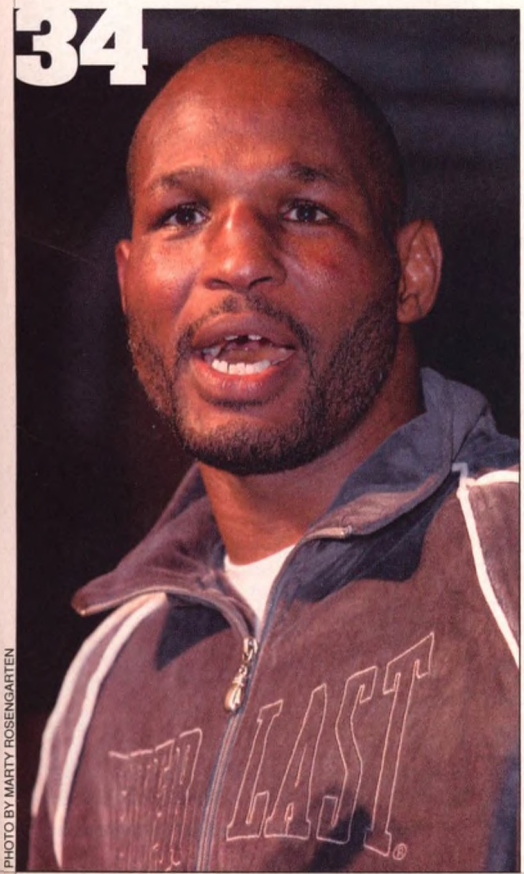

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

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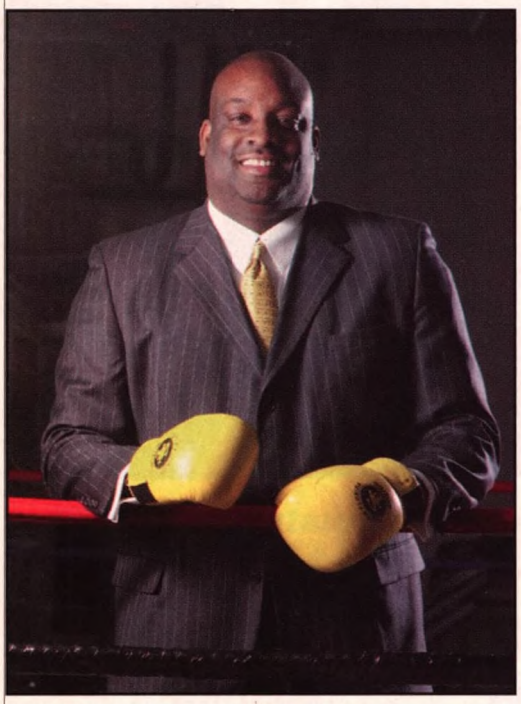
Meet The New Commish

Aaron Davis' love for boxing was cultivated watching the sport with his father, a high school teacher and coach. Davis was raised in New Jersey and always had a desire to return to the Garden State in some capacity.



Davis is the new New Jersey commissioner

On October 27, the 39-year-old did, as the new commissioner of the New Jersey State Athletic Control Board. Davis took over for acting commissioner Sylvester Cuyler, a longtime assistant of former New Jersey commissioner Larry Hazzard, who was fired in November 2007.

Davis, who had been the boxing commissioner of Kansas since 2004, would like to keep some of the standards that were instituted under Hazzard.

"When I first started in Kansas four years ago, I looked at what other states were doing, and there were some things that Larry Hazzard did that I looked at and copied," Davis said. "You'd be a fool not to look at what some of the better people have done, like Greg Sirb in Pennsylvania. There were no big problems in New Jersey. I want to keep that safety record and rich heritage alive.

Davis insists he will continue to emphasize boxers' safety. "Under Hazzard," he said, "you knew you were safe fighting in New Jersey. I want to be able to piggyback off the great things Hazzard did and build from there. I have to make sure we have officials and judges that are beyond controversy. We have to make sure we do that with all of our sports, mixed martial arts and boxing."

Davis also said he would like to bring more big-time fights to New Jersey.

"New Jersey was the place to go if you wanted to box. I'd like to bring that back," Davis said. "I'd be willing to sit down with all entities, casinos, promoters, fight managers, and ask what they want from me, and in turn, ask them what I want from them.

"I want to make sure people understand that I'm going to be very approachable and open to suggestions. But I plan on being stern on some issues. As long as everyone knows my attitude that the fighters are the priority above everything else."

—Joseph Santoliquito

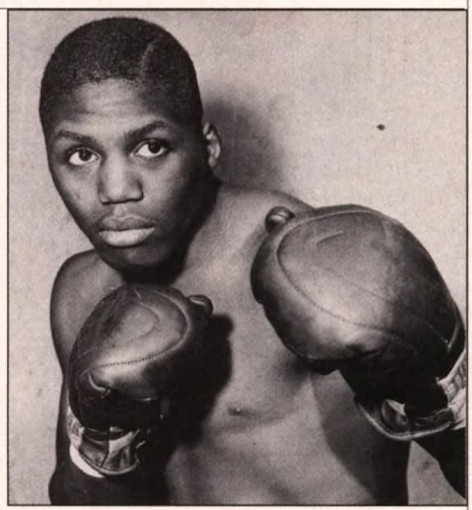
Johnny Saxton, 1930-2008

The decisions that twice conferred the welterweight championship on Johnny Saxton (against Kid Gavilan and Carmen Basilio) provoked loud outrage and cynicism about professional boxing in the era of Frankie Carbo. Saxton was managed by Blinky Palermo, and Palermo was managed by Carbo, the crime lord who made boxing his personal chessboard in the 1950s.

Of all the pawns in Carbo's ruthless game, maybe none was more pitiable than Saxton, whose future was foretold when he went to live at Brooklyn's Riverdale Orphanage at age five. Social workers noted his "deep sense of insecurity" and worried that he might end up "following some bolder spirit into real trouble."

That happened after Saxton, who started boxing in the orphanage and won the 1948 National Golden Gloves 147-pound title, turned pro with Palermo calling the shots.

Saxton won 39 in a row (with one draw), but several of his bouts were odd. After he beat Lester Felton on a disqualification at Madison Square Garden in 1952, boxing commissioner Robert Christen-



Mob-controlled Saxton deserved better

berry urged Saxton to do his fighting anywhere but New York for a while.

When he got the decision over Gavilan on October 20, 1954, Budd Schulberg wrote that Saxton "had about as much right to be the welterweight champion of the world as mentor Blinky Palermo has to be mayor of Philadelphia," Palermo's hometown, where the fight was held.

Tony DeMarco TKO'd Saxton for the crown in 1955, and Johnny regained it the next year in Chicago from Basilio, who'd beaten DeMarco. New York columnist Dan Parker said the verdict for Saxton "made the stockyards smell by comparison like a blooming orange grove."

Basilio stopped Saxton in a rematch, and by 1958 Saxton was finished. Frequently in trouble with the law, he was arrested that year for burglarizing a house for the whopping sum of $5.25. His boxing purses amounted to $250,000, but Saxton told the judge, "No one ever gave me more than a couple hundred dollars at a time."

A year later, the 29-year-old Saxton was hospitalized after a failed suicide attempt. "That's what boxing did for me," said the despondent ex-champ.

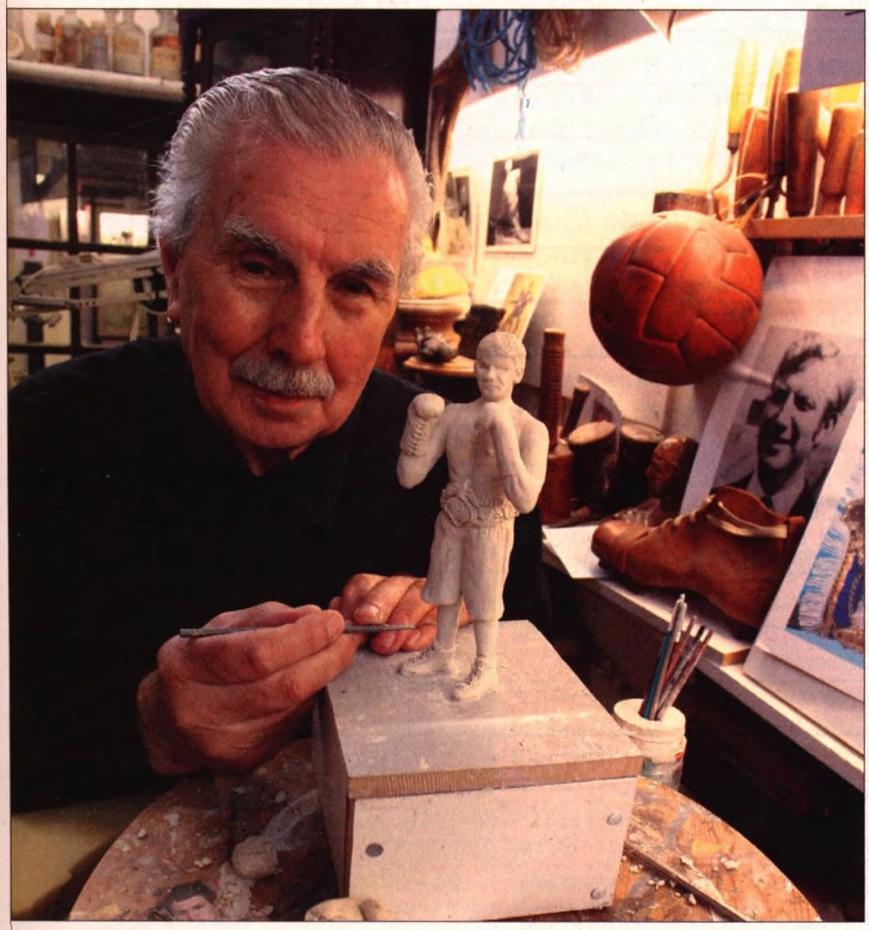
The fact that Saxton, who passed away last October 4 at age 78, hung in for another 50 years is a testament to the man who, though derided as a "gifted clutch artist" with dubious championship *bona fides*, beat champions Johnny Bratton, Joey Giardello, and Virgil Atkins, and such worthies as Tiger Jones and Gil Turner, in compiling a record of 55-9-2 (21).

—Pete Ehrmann

Bronzing The Brits

Who doesn't belong: heads of state, royalty, ballerinas, or a beer-chugging, ruddy-cheeked bloke from Manchester, England, who punches people in the face for a living?

Chances are, at one time or another, sculptor Gordon C. Brown carved them all. He doesn't discriminate. He was an amateur fighter before he became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and also Royal Sculptor, having created a bust of Queen Elizabeth II.



Brown works on Hatton statue

Now he's working on British boxing royalty, Manchester-based junior welterweight world champion Ricky Hatton.

"As a former amateur boxer myself, I have always wanted to do a series of boxers and my obvious choice is Ricky Hatton," Brown said. "I have covered most of the sports, including skating, ice hockey, equestrian, and football in designing special awards and trophies in miniature (maquette) for full-size sculptures."

Hatton wants to go one better. His miniature bronze images will be auctioned off to help raise money for the Genesis Appeal for Cancer, based in Manchester.

"My idea is to have limited editions available in bronze," Brown said. "I did get permission from Ricky Hatton and agreed that a percentage will go to his favorite charity, which is the Genesis Appeal for Cancer. It's very commendable what Ricky is trying to do."

Brown used to design research equipment before converting an unused mushroom and chicken farm in Sherwood Forest into the Longdale Craft Centre. He currently has more time for his carvings, which include a collection of eight ballet sculptures that won him international acclaim in the 1980s and was exhibited at the Royal Festival Hall in London.

—Joseph Santoliquito

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
9/19/08	Vanes Martirosyan W 10 Michael Medina *Armenian-born U.S. Olympian easily wins battle of unbeatens*	Telefutura	jm	B-	B	C+
9/19/08	Kid Diamond W 10 Javier Jauregui *This Diamond is looking more and more like cubic zirconia*	Telefutura	l	B-	B	C+
9/25/08	Chris Arreola KO 3 Israel Garcia *Forget sparring, it looks like Arreola ate James Toney*	Versus	h	B-	C-	C-
9/25/08	Paul Williams KO 1 Andy Kolle *World's biggest welterweight ices middleweight clubfighter*	Versus	m	B-	C-	D
9/26/08	Nestor Rocha KO 2 Javier Cintron *A fine stoppage by the fighter and referee*	Telefutura	b	C+	C-	C+
9/26/08	Vicente Escobedo KO 6 Dominic Salcido *Pink-and-black checkerboard hairdo makes a good target*	Telefutura	l	B-	B-	B+
9/27/08	Andre Berto W 12 Steve Forbes *When's Forbes going to get an opponent his size?*	HBO	w	B	C+	C+
9/27/08	Shane Mosley KO 12 Ricardo Mayorga *A beautiful finish to an ugly fight*	HBO	jm	A-	B+	B
10/03/08	Fernando Guerrero W 8 Tyrone Watson *Guerrero has the loudest fans this side of Manchester*	Showtime	m	C+	C+	C+
10/03/08	James De La Rosa W 10 Tim Coleman *The most impressive young bodypuncher since Barrera?*	Showtime	w	C+	B+	B
10/03/08	Brandon Rios D 10 Manuel Perez *Rios' orange trunks must have swayed Denver judges in his favor*	Telefutura	jl	C+	C+	B-
10/03/08	Mike Alvarado KO 4 Manuel Garnica *Garnica was looking for the exit during ringwalk*	Telefutura	jw	C+	C	C-
10/04/08	Alex De Jesus KO 8 Jose Izquierdo *De Jesus scores three knockdowns without shifting into high gear*	PPV	jw	C	C	C-
10/04/08	Jose Lopez KO 7 Jonathan Perez *It's taken Lopez seven years without a loss to get a title shot*	PPV	jb	B+	C	B-
10/04/08	Juan Manuel Lopez KO 1 Cesar Figueroa *Will JuanMa title fights be recorded in seconds or rounds?*	PPV	jf	A-	B-	A-
10/04/08	Alfredo Angulo KO 10 Andrey Tsurkan *What was the ref and Tsurkan's corner waiting for?*	HBO	w	B-	B-	B-
10/04/08	Sergio Martinez KO 8 Alex Bunema *A performance that screams out for a title shot*	HBO	jm	A-	B+	B
10/04/08	Yuriorkis Gamboa KO 2 Marcos Ramirez *Why are we shocked when a guy with 12 pro fights makes mistakes?*	HBO	f	B-	C	C+
10/10/08	David Rodela W 8 Kevin Kelley *"The Flushing Flash" is now far more flush than flash*	Telefutura	jl	B-	C+	C+
10/10/08	David Lopez W 12 Samuel Miller *Thirteen wins in a row for today's most unappreciated middleweight*	Telefutura	m	B	C+	C
10/11/08	Chad Dawson W 12 Antonio Tarver *Dawson's fists leave a bigger impression then Tarver's words*	Showtime	lhw	A-	B+	B
10/11/08	Vitali Klitschko KO 9 Samuel Peter *Don't you have to start something in order to be called a quitter?*	Showtime	h	A-	A-	C-
10/17/08	Jonathan Oquendo W 10 Jose Beranza *Prospect trying to overcome two loses to become a prospect again*	Telefutura	jf	C	C	C
10/17/08	Irving Garcia W 10 Chris Smith *"The Mechanic" dismantled by chop artist*	Telefutura	w	C+	C	C+
10/18/08	Marco Antonio Rubio W 12 Enrique Ornelas *Ornelas can't hold off Rubio's late rally*	PPV	m	B-	B	B
10/18/08	Steven Luevano W 12 Billy Dib *PPV buzz killer!*	PPV	f	B	B-	C-
10/18/08	Bernard Hopkins W 12 Kelly Pavlik *Hopkins schools Pavlik and the pundits*	PPV	lh	A	A	A

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Justice For Johnson

The great Jack Johnson, the world's first black heavyweight champion, went to his grave in June 1946 with a criminal record borne of racism and injustice. If Congressman Peter King of New York has his way, the record is about to be set straight—62 years later.

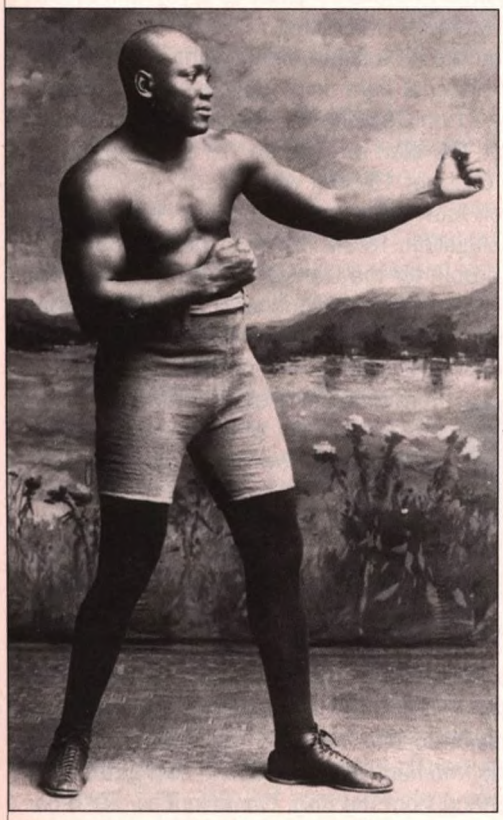
In 2004, King authored legislation to pardon Johnson. The bill recently passed the House by unanimous voice vote and is pending in the Senate, where John McCain introduced the companion bill in previous congresses.

"I've always been a boxing fan and I've read a lot about Johnson and his fights with [Jim] Jeffries and [Jess] Willard," King told THE RING. "His prosecution was clearly racially motivated and is a stain on the American judicial system."

As most historians and fight fans know, Johnson was convicted in 1913 of violating The Mann Act, which prohibited the transportation of women across state lines for "immoral" purposes (see prostitution). In reality, Johnson had done no such thing. But he had committed two unpardonable sins of early-20th century America: He easily beat the world's best white challengers, and he cavorted, quite openly and with a measure of glee that was all too apparent, with white women. That was enough.

"It was a rank frame-up," Johnson wrote in his autobiography, *Jack Johnson In The Ring And Out*. "The charges were based on a law that was not in effect at the time Belle and I had been together, and legally was not operative against me. The whole accusation was unfounded and I do not hesitate to say that fraudulent practices were adopted, so bitter and intense was the fight that had been opened up on me."

Johnson had planned to serve out the sentence and be done with it, but was persuaded by his mother to flee instead. That's what he did, going first to Canada and then Europe and finally Mexico. He defended the title twice in Paris and fought several exhibitions in Buenos Aires.



Overdue pardon in the works for Johnson

Jess Willard stopped Johnson in the 26th round in Havana in April 1915 to win the title. Five years later, Johnson, apparently homesick, surrendered to U.S. authorities and did eight months at Leavenworth Prison in Kansas. The conviction was never expunged, a failure highlighted in the critically acclaimed Ken Burns documentary *Unforgivable Blackness*, which chronicled Johnson's long career.

"It was an abuse of the criminal justice system and this is one way of setting the record straight," King said.

The good news is that if things go the way they should, Johnson will be posthumously pardoned. The bad is that it took 62 years and an act of Congress to do it.

—William Dettloff

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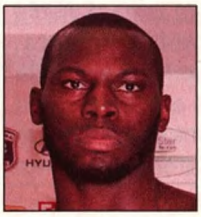
Outside the Ropes

Cruiserweight **Steve Cunningham** was presented with the Briscoe Award as Philadelphia's 2007 Fighter of the Year at an October 22 press conference for his bout with **Tomasz Adamek** for the vacant RING magazine cruiserweight championship. The award, named after legendary Philadelphia middleweight **Bennie Briscoe**, is the brainchild of historian **John DiSanto** of phillyboxinghistory.com ... Former super middleweight titleholder **Chris Eubank** will appear in the British reality TV show *I'm A Celebrity ... Get Me Out Of Here!* ... A benefit card for former IBF junior flyweight titleholder **Victor Burgos** was held at the Municipal Auditorium in Tijuana, Mexico, on October 20. Burgos, who suffered a brain injury in his March 2007 bout with **Vic Darchinyan**, is still recuperating from the career-ending injury. All of the fighters on the card donated their services and the gate proceeds went to Burgos and his family ... WBC lightweight titleholder **Nate Campbell** declared Chapter 7 bankruptcy after his fight with **Joan Guzman** was cancelled, depriving him of a purse of approximately $300,000 ... **Azumah Nelson**, 50, is pursuing legal action after being paid $272,000 for his fight with **Jeff Fenech**, 44, on June 24 in Melbourne, Australia. Nelson claims he was promised $800,000, but Fenech and his partner in the promotion, **Max Markson**, deny any money was owed to Nelson ... British junior welterweight **Gilbert Eastman**, 35, was fully conscious and in stable condition following surgery to remove a blood clot from his brain. Eastman suffered the injury in his October 17 bout with **Sam Well**. Eastman, the older brother of former middleweight contender **Howard Eastman**, was stopped in the eighth round and collapsed in the dressing room.



Cunningham: Wins Briscoe Award

Campbell: Declares bankruptcy

"They expect him to make a full recovery," said **Patrice Eastman**, Gilbert's wife ... Police briefly detained former South African featherweight titleholder **Edward "Spoiler" Mpofu** after plaster of paris was allegedly found inside of his gloves following his September 29 six-round decision loss to **Thanduxolo Dyani** in East London. Promoter **Mzi Mnguni** said he discovered the loaded gloves while shaking hands with Mpofu after the bout. Mpofu faces a lifetime ban from boxing ... **Kanyanta Mulenga**, 23, was found guilty of the shooting death of former British heavyweight champion **James Oyebola** in July 2007. Mulenga is facing life imprisonment. Two other men, **Rene McKoy** and **Dean Francis**, were cleared after agreeing to give evidence to the prosecution. A fourth man, **Cyle Carth**, will face a separate trial ... New Jersey-based trainer **Oscar Suarez**, 47, died of pancreatic cancer on September 15. Among the many top fighters he worked with were **Naseem Hamed**, **Acelino Freitas**, **Johnny Tapia**, and **Jhonny Gonzalez**. "He was very protective of his fighters," longtime friend **Jose Rosario** told *Star-Ledger* boxing writer **Franklin McNeil**. "If he felt a fighter was taking too much punishment, Oscar would not hesitate to step in the ring and stop the fight" ... Well-know Manchester, England, fight figure **Brian Robinson**, 73, died on September 28 of a suspected heart attack. Robinson fought both as an amateur and professional as a young man and later became a promoter and trainer ... **Tony LaRosa**, 32-23 (18), who turned pro as a light heavyweight in September 1988 and had his final fight as a heavyweight in August '04, died at age 41 on October 5 ... Mexican featherweight **Daniel Aguillon**, 24, died on October 18 of a head injury suffered in an October 15 bout with **Alejandro Sanabria**, 17-0 (13), which took place in the Polanco neighborhood of Mexico City. Aguillon, 15-3-2 (9), was knocked out in the 12th round of a bout for the Central American 126-pound title and never regained consciousness. Although he had also been down in the first round, Aguillon had floored Sanabria in the fourth round of a competitive fight ...

Suarez: Cancer victim

Castellani: Dead at 80

Former middleweight contender **Rocky Castellani**, 80, died on August 31 in Atlantic City, New Jersey. He turned pro in February 1944 and had his final bout in October '57, compiling an overall pro record of 65-14-4 (16). Castellani beat many outstanding fighters, including **Joey Giardello**, **Tony Janiro**, **Gil Turner**, **Harold Green**, and **Johnny Bratton**. In his only world title fight, Castellani lost a unanimous 15-round decision to **Bobo Olson** in August 1954. Castellani lost a split decision to **Sugar Ray Robinson** the following year, even though he had Robinson on the floor in the sixth round. After retiring from the ring, Castellani owned a bar and worked as a fight judge.

Quotable

"Screw Hopkins, I'm not fighting him again for any amount of money."

—Joe Calzaghe responding to calls for a rematch with Bernard Hopkins, following B-Hop's upset victory over formerly undefeated Kelly Pavlik

"I tell you something—he could get whooped by a nobody because he is doing the wrong thing with his body. This drinking is no good. It is going to catch up with you somewhere down the line."

—Trainer Floyd Mayweather Sr., speaking to Pat Sheenan of ***The Sun*** *about Ricky Hatton's boozy lifestyle*

[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended October 27, 2008

Heavyweights: Vitali Klitschko makes a big return, re-entering the ratings at two after his lopsided victory over previous number-two contender Sam Peter, who plummets to seven. The shakeup forces down Oleg Maskaev (seventh last issue) to eight and John Ruiz (ninth last issue) to 10. Juan Carlos Gomez debuts at nine after vanquishing Vladimir Virchis (eighth last issue), who departs along with Chris Arreola (10th last issue).

Cruiserweights: Guillermo Jones returns to the ratings at five after beating Firat Arslan (fifth last issue), who drops to seven. Jones' inclusion drops everyone rated seven through nine down one slot, forcing out Rudolf Kraj (10th last issue).

Light Heavyweights: Chad Dawson (third last issue) leaps to two after beating Antonio Tarver (second last issue), who drops to four. Dawson's victory also helped Glen Johnson, who jumps from four to three.

Super Middleweights: Joe Calzaghe has alerted THE RING that he is stepping down as champion to campaign exclusively at light heavyweight. Lucian Bute (third last issue) and Librado Andrade (fourth last issue) move up one place each after their spirited battle, dropping Anthony Mundine (second last issue) to four.

Middleweights: Two switches: David Lopez (seventh last issue) moves up one spot, trading places with Javier Castillejo (sixth last issue); while Marco Antonio Rubio (10th last issue) moves to nine, changing places with Buddy McGirt Jr. (ninth last issue).

Junior Middleweights: Sergio Martinez enters at six, replacing Alex Bunema (sixth last issue), who departs after being stopped in eight by Martinez.

Welterweights: No changes.

Junior Welterweights: No changes.

Lightweights: No changes.

Junior Lightweights: No changes.

Featherweights: Steve Luevano (third last issue) moves up to two, switching with Jorge Solis (second last issue). Jorge Linares (fifth last issue) replaces Hiroyuki Enoki (fourth last issue), who drops to five. Oscar Larios returns to the ratings at eight after beating Takahiro Aoh (eight last issue), who falls to nine. Cristobal Cruz enters the ratings at 10, replacing Choi Tseveenpurev, who departs.

Junior Featherweights: No changes.

Bantamweights: No changes.

Junior Bantamweights: No changes.

Flyweights: No changes.

Junior Flyweights: Ranked seven last issue, Daniel Reyes' switch to strawweight moves everyone from eight through 10 up one place and enables Rayonta Whitfield to debut at 10.

Strawweights: Daniel Reyes drops from junior flyweight to enter strawweight at 10. Reyes' inclusion forces out Juan Palacios from 10.

Pound-for-pound: Kelly Pavlik (seventh last issue) drops out after losing a one-sided fight to Bernard Hopkins. Pavlik's departure moves up Cristian Mijares (eight last issue), Rafael Marquez (ninth last issue), and Miguel Cotto (10th last issue) one place each, while Ivan Calderon returns to the pound-for-pound list at 10.

The RING
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Lightweight
2. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Lightweight
3. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Light Heavyweight
4. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
5. **Israel Vazquez**
   Junior Featherweight
6. **Antonio Margarito**
   Welterweight
7. **Cristian Mijares**
   Junior Bantamweight
8. **Rafael Marquez**
   Junior Featherweight
9. **Miguel Cotto**
   Welterweight
10. **Ivan Calderon**
    Junior Flyweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **TheRing-online.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended October 27, 2008

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

THE RING Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of THE RING Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at thering-online.com.

Records provided by boxrec.com.

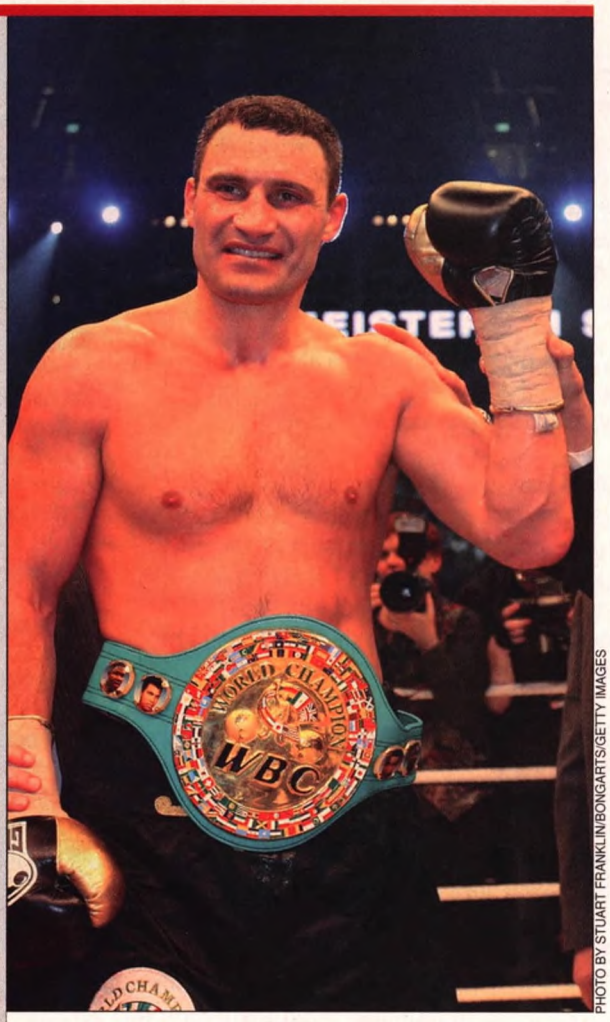


PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Heavyweight Vitali Klitschko thrust himself back into the heavyweight picture, returning to the ratings at number two

Heavyweights
Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 51-3 (45)
2. **VITALI KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 36-2 (35)
3. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 24-0-1 (17)
4. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 49-1 (34)
5. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN** Russia 16-0 (12)
6. **SULTAN IBRAGIMOV** Russia 22-1-1 (17)
7. **SAMUEL PETER** Nigeria 30-2 (23)
8. **OLEG MASKAEV** Kazakhstan 35-6 (26)
9. **JUAN CARLOS GOMEZ** Cuba 44-1 (35)
10. **JOHN RUIZ** Chelsea, MA 43-8-1 (29)

Jr. Middleweights
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 41-3 (29)
2. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Belize 42-10-1 (21)
3. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 39-5 (30)
4. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 36-5 (11)
5. **SERGIO MORA** Los Angeles, CA 21-1-1 (5)
6. **SERGIO MARTINEZ** Argentina 44-1-1 (24)
7. **DANIEL SANTOS** Puerto Rico 32-3-1 (23)
8. **JOACHIM ALCINE** Haiti 30-1 (19)
9. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK** Ukraine 35-0 (22)
10. **JOEL JULIO** Colombia 34-1 (31)

Featherweights
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 42-0-1 (22)
2. **STEVEN LUEVANO** La Puente, CA 36-1-1 (15)
3. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 36-1-2 (26)
4. **JORGE LINARES** Venezuela 25-0 (16)
5. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 27-1-2 (19)
6. **MARIO SANTIAGO** Puerto Rico 19-1-1 (14)
7. **MARTIN HONORIO** Mexico 24-4-1 (12)
8. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico 63-6-1 (39)
9. **TAKAHIRO AOH** Japan 16-1-1 (8)
10. **CRISTOBAL CRUZ** Mexico 37-11-1 (23)

Jr. Featherweights
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 43-4 (31)

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 37-5 (33)
2. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 30-2 (21)
3. **JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ** Puerto Rico 23-0 (21)
4. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 28-0 (11)
5. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 36-1 (25)
6. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 33-1 (18)
7. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 34-2 (30)
8. **REY BAUTISTA** Philippines 26-1 (19)
9. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 34-1-2 (21)
10. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 39-6 (33)

Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 25-2 (9)
2. **ANSELMO MORENO** Panama 23-1-1 (8)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 21-1-2 (7)
4. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 22-2 (18)
5. **GERRY PENALOSA** Philippines 53-6-2 (36)
6. **JOSEPH AGBEKO** Ghana 25-1 (22)
7. **ABNER MARES** Mexico 17-0 (10)
8. **VUSI MALINGA** South Africa 18-2-1 (11)
9. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ** Panama 27-2 (20)
10. **LUIS PEREZ** Nicaragua 25-3 (16)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM** Philadelphia, PA 21-1 (11)
2. **TOMASZ ADAMEK** Poland 35-1 (24)
3. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK** Guadeloupe 33-4 (22)
4. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK** Poland 41-2 (31)
5. **GUILLERMO JONES** Panama 36-3-2 (28)
6. **O'NEIL BELL** Jamaica 26-3-1 (24)
7. **FIRAT ARSLAN** *Germany 29-4-1 (18)
8. **ENZO MACCARINELLI** Wales 28-2 (21)
9. **MARCO HUCK** Yugoslavia 23-1 (18)
10. **VADIM TOKAREV** Russia 25-1-1 (18)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE Wales 45-0 (32)

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS** Philadelphia, PA 49-5-1 (32)
2. **CHAD DAWSON** New Haven, CT 27-0 (17)
3. **GLEN JOHNSON** Jamaica 47-12-2 (32)
4. **ANTONIO TARVER** Orlando, FL 27-5 (19)
5. **ZSOLT ERDEI** Hungary 29-0 (17)
6. **ROY JONES** Pensacola, FL 52-4 (38)
7. **CLINTON WOODS** England 41-4-1 (24)
8. **ADRIAN DIACONU** Romania 25-0 (15)
9. **CHRIS HENRY** Houston, TX 22-1 (18)
10. **HUGO GARAY** Argentina 31-3 (17)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER** Denmark 41-1 (31)
2. **LUCIAN BUTE** Romania 23-0 (18)
3. **LIBRADO ANDRADE** Mexico 27-2 (21)
4. **ANTHONY MUNDINE** Australia 33-3 (23)
5. **JEFF LACY** St. Petersburg, FL 24-1 (17)
6. **CARL FROCH** England 23-0 (19)
7. **ALLAN GREEN** Tulsa, OK 26-1 (18)
8. **SAKIO BIKA** Cameroon 26-3-2 (16)
9. **DENIS INKIN** Russia 34-0 (24)
10. **JERMAIN TAYLOR** Little Rock, AR 27-2-1 (17)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: KELLY PAVLIK Youngstown, OH 34-1 (30)

1. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM** Armenia 27-0 (22)
2. **FELIX STURM** Germany 30-2-1 (13)
3. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER** Germany 29-2 (14)
4. **AMIN ASIKAINEN** Finland 25-1 (17)
5. **RANDY GRIFFIN** Louisville, KY 24-2-3 (12)
6. **DAVID LOPEZ** Mexico 37-12 (23)
7. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO** Spain 62-8 (43)
8. **RAUL MARQUEZ** Mexico 41-3-1 (29)
9. **MARCO ANTONIO RUBIO** Mexico 43-4-1 (37)
10. **JAMES McGIRT JR.** Vero Beach, FL 19-1 (9)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ANTONIO MARGARITO** Mexico 37-5 (27)
2. **PAUL WILLIAMS** Augusta, GA 35-1 (26)
3. **MIGUEL COTTO** Puerto Rico 32-1 (26)
4. **SHANE MOSLEY** Pomona, CA 45-5 (38)
5. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY** Ghana 35-2 (20)
6. **CARLOS QUINTANA** Puerto Rico 26-2 (20)
7. **ZAB JUDAH** Brooklyn, NY 36-6 (25)
8. **LUIS COLLAZO** Queens, NY 29-3 (14)
9. **ISAAC HLATSWAYO** South Africa 28-1 (10)
10. **ANDRE BERTO** Winter Haven, FL 23-0 (19)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON England 44-1 (31)

1. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI** Brooklyn, NY 25-1 (5)
2. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY** Palm Springs, CA 23-0 (11)
3. **JUNIOR WITTER** England 36-2-2 (21)
4. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK** Ukraine 30-2-1 (13)
5. **HERMAN NGOUDJO** Cameroon 17-2 (9)
6. **KENDALL HOLT** Paterson, NJ 24-2 (13)
7. **RICARDO TORRES** Colombia 32-2 (28)
8. **JUAN URANGO** Colombia 20-1-1 (16)
9. **LOVEMORE NDOU** South Africa 46-10-1 (31)
10. **JUAN LAZCANO** Mexico 37-5-1 (27)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ Mexico 49-4-1 (36)

1. **NATE CAMPBELL** Jacksonville, FL 32-5-1 (25)
2. **MANNY PACQUIAO** Philippines 47-3-2 (35)
3. **JUAN DIAZ** Houston, TX 34-1 (17)
4. **JOEL CASAMAYOR** Cuba 36-4-1 (22)
5. **DAVID DIAZ** Chicago, IL 34-2-1 (17)
6. **JULIO DIAZ** Mexico 35-4 (26)
7. **ANTONIO PITALUA** Mexico 46-3 (40)
8. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS** Australia 23-2 (20)
9. **ALI FUNEKA** South Africa 30-1-2 (25)
10. **YURI ROMANOV** Belarus 21-2 (14)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **EDWIN VALERO** Venezuela 24-0 (24)
2. **HUMBERTO SOTO** Mexico 45-7-2 (29)
3. **ROCKY JUAREZ** Houston, TX 28-4 (20)
4. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI** Thailand 56-3-1 (45)
5. **CASSIUS BALOYI** South Africa 36-3-1 (19)
6. **MZONKE FANA** South Africa 28-4 (11)
7. **NICKY COOK** England 29-1(16)
8. **JORGE BARRIOS** Argentina 47-4-1 (34)
9. **URBANO ANTILLON** Mexico 24-0 (17)
10. **ROMAN MARTINEZ** Puerto Rico 20-0-1 (12)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CRISTIAN MIJARES** Mexico 36-3-2 (15)
2. **FERNANDO MONTIEL** Mexico 37-2-1 (28)
3. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ** Venezuela 32-3 (27)
4. **VIC DARCHINYAN** Armenia 30-1-1 (24)
5. **NOBUO NASHIRO** Japan 12-1 (7)
6. **JORGE ARCE** Mexico 50-4-1 (38)
7. **JOSE NAVARRO** Los Angeles, CA 26-4 (12)
8. **Z GORRES** Philippines 28-2-2 (15)
9. **DIMITRI KIRILOV** Russia 29-4-1 (9)
10. **KOHEI KONO** Japan 21-4 (7)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NONITO DONAIRE** Philippines 19-1 (12)
2. **DAISUKE NAITO** Japan 33-2-3 (21)
3. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM** Thailand 68-3-1 (36)
4. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA** Japan 33-4-2 (15)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ** Argentina 28-0-2 (17)
6. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT** Thailand 45-1-1 (19)
7. **JOSE LOPEZ** Puerto Rico 38-7-2 (32)
8. **KOKI KAMEDA** Japan 19-0 (12)
9. **HUGO CAZARES** Mexico 26-5-1 (19)
10. **MORUTI MTHALANE** South Africa 22-1 (15)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: IVAN CALDERON Puerto Rico 32-0 (6)

1. **ULISES SOLIS** Mexico 27-1-2 (20)
2. **CESAR CANCHILA** Colombia 27-1 (21)
3. **GIOVANNI SEGURA** Mexico 19-1-1 (15)
4. **EDGAR SOSA** Mexico 33-5 (17)
5. **JUANITO RUBILLAR** Philippines 46-10-7 (22)
6. **OMAR NINO** Mexico 26-3-1 (11)
7. **NELSON DIEPPA** Puerto Rico 25-5-2 (14)
8. **BRAHIM ASLOUM** France 23-2 (9)
9. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO** Argentina 18-1 (9)
10. **RAYONTA WHITFIELD** Augusta, GA 22-0 (11)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROMAN GONZALEZ** Nicaragua 21-0 (19)
2. **RAUL GARCIA** Mexico 24-0-1 (15)
3. **YUTAKA NIIDA** Japan 23-2-3 (9)
4. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI** Thailand 28-0 (12)
5. **EAGLE KYOWA** Thailand 18-2 (6)
6. **FLORANTE CONDES** Philippines 22-4-1 (20)
7. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN** Indonesia 62-6-5 (31)
8. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA** Japan 22-3 (9)
9. **DONNIE NIETES** Philippines 23-1-3 (14)
10. **DANIEL REYES** Colombia 40-5-1 (30)

By Jeff Ryan

The Spiral Stare Case

Andy Kaufman's act was certainly not for everybody, but there were some of us who thought the late comedian was truly brilliant. So brilliant, in fact, that we're still not completely convinced that he is a *late* comedian. Many of Kaufman's antics—from his wrestling feuds and meltdown on live-TV to his appearance as a contestant on *The Dating Game*—had us wondering where the line between reality and put-on existed. And it's a testimony to his originality and bizarre sense of humor that some fans believe Kaufman's reported death in 1984 was simply one more inventive stunt, and that he's going to part the curtain and walk right out onto Jay Leno's stage one of these nights.

It was Mr. Andy Kaufman, not George Foreman or Archie Moore, who came to mind not long after Bernard Hopkins simultaneously flipped the bird to his critics, the middleweight champion of the world, and Father Time on October 18 in Atlantic City. At the (Ice) age of 43, Hopkins came back to life after tricking us all into thinking that his days as a superstar who commanded big, bold headlines were buried beneath six feet of soil.

"The Executioner's" previous battle, against Joe Calzaghe in April, typified the Hopkins of middle age. (Yes, Bernard, *middle age*. Unless you're planning to live beyond 86.) We watched a "B-Hop" who, despite the gray whiskers, was able to floor one of the sport's pound-for-pound best, yet faded late and lost a split decision. It was Hopkins at his most/least effective. That meant holding and stalling, fighting in spurts, and trying to win as much with his brain as his fists. Where once The Executioner was a one-man firing squad, in recent years he'd executed only energy-conserving game plans. Still good, just not what he once was.

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Hopkins hands Pavlik a painful boxing lesson

As we saw in his evisceration of Kelly Pavlik, however, Hopkins the Once-Great was merely setting us up for this jaw-dropper of a surprise. He was magnificent in dominating Pavlik, a devastating puncher who was 17 years younger, undefeated, and seemingly arriving at this match at the perfect time. Hopkins dusted off his combinations and shocked his foe with his hand speed and stamina, and with the discipline to keep moving to Pavlik's left and away from his power.

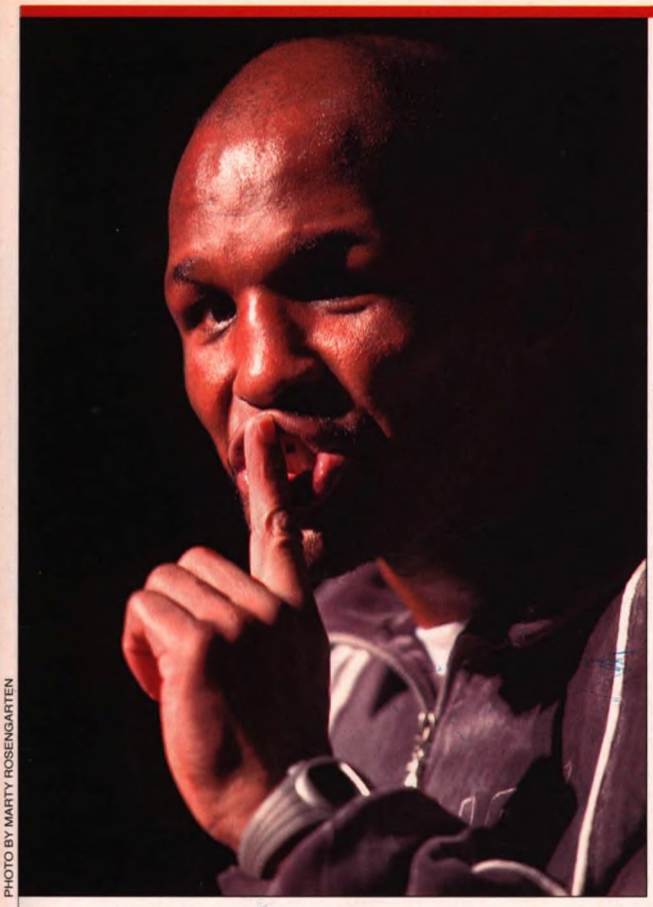


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

"The Executioner" silences his critics

When the final bell clanged, Hopkins looked into a television camera and then out into press row and delivered a stare that made the if-looks-could-kill glares of a prime Mike Tyson look like friendly winks. Hopkins was letting us know that he didn't appreciate being a 4-1 underdog or listening to those of us "in the know" have the audacity to pick against him.

If you know Hopkins, you know that stare was as much for show as the eerie mask he dons for his walk to the battlefield. He'll get fed up with the media only on the day when reporters stop scribbling furiously while he gives 10-minute responses to questions that can be answered in 45 seconds.

Said Hopkins, "They say, 'Bernard is old.' Yes I am. They say, 'Bernard is finished.' They ain't saying that now."

No, but *Hopkins* is once again saying that day is approaching. Seeing him against Pavlik, you got the impression that he could keep this up for another two or three years. But B-Hop is hinting that his next showdown could be his last. For real. That's why it has to be an intriguing one. Calzaghe, who was about to face Roy Jones as we went to press, said he's done with Hopkins. (If I'd barely beaten a clutching, tiring Hopkins, I'd want nothing to do with a newly aggressive, reinvigorated Hopkins, either.) Jones, should he have beaten Calzaghe by the time you read this, is the next obvious choice for an opponent. It was Jones, after all, who handed Hopkins his first high-profile defeat, via decision in 1993. In my mind, though, Hopkins-Jones II lost a lot of its appeal when Jones suffered back-to-back kayo defeats four years ago.

Give me a telephone, a Rolodex, and more money than a suite full of AIG executives could blow on a weekend golf outing, and I'll zero in on two targets: Chad Dawson and ... Floyd Mayweather.

In Dawson, Hopkins would be facing an unbeaten 26-year-old boxer-puncher who is on the rise and, unlike Pavlik, is as big and strong as B-Hop. As for Mayweather, well, what sales pitch needs to be offered here? Don't tell me Hopkins can't make 160 pounds any longer. For the right price/challenge/perceived insult to his pride, he'll make 120 pounds. Mayweather could come into the ring at 157 (just three pounds more than he weighed against Oscar De La Hoya) and still be the faster fighter. The pre-fight trash talk would be so rich, it would be reprinted in textbooks and taught in boxing gyms and on playground basketball courts around the world. And the prize would be the winner's knowledge that he'd beaten the best overall talent that he'd ever faced.

Oh, to be Bernard Hopkins right now. And, *ugh*, to be Kelly Pavlik. He returns to the middleweight division as its champion, sure, but with his deficiencies exposed, his aura dissipated, and his confidence no doubt damaged. The kid who flattened Hopkins-conqueror Jermain Taylor proved to be overmatched against an old man. Pavlik said afterward that something was wrong. He said he wasn't himself against Hopkins and couldn't let his punches go, not realizing—or, like a losing World Series team, maybe just not admitting—that the opposing pitcher had a whole lot to do with that.

You wonder what we'll see from Pavlik after the inevitable rehabilitation tuneup against a tomato can rustier than the abandoned factories in his native Youngstown, Ohio. Will future challengers follow Hopkins' blueprint and circle to Pavlik's left to nullify his punishing right cross? Will they, too, attack the body in the hope of turning his right from an offensive weapon to a rib-protecting defensive one? Will they make Pavlik pay for that split-second of hesitation before he jabs, the way that Hopkins did?

Perhaps. Or maybe this spanking, like the one another Youngstown tough guy (Ray Mancini) once got from another legend (Alexis Arguello) will make the vanquished a better fighter. Pavlik may have been over-hyped and overrated, *or* he may have simply been overcome by one of the greatest warriors to ever punch for pay. A physical marvel. A master tactician who managed to go back in time when we least expected it. A guy we promise to never pick against again, *um*, even though he'll be 44 in January, could have difficulty with Dawson's strength and height, and might have trouble catching Mayweather without a tuna net.

As a matter of fact, Hopkins is likely to have problems with—oops, forget it. Not gonna go there. Unlike Kelly Pavlik round after bruising round, I won't get suckered again. ■

By Ivan Goldman

Magoos On Top

In keeping with the upended global economy, this month's column is upside down. It starts, rather than finishes, with Magoos.

Magoo One: To California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who must take the blame for a state athletic commission that's this century's version of the Keystone Cops. True, the governor doesn't appoint all the commissioners. Members of the State Legislature select some, but the buck has to stop somewhere.

Take my word for it. You don't have to reside in California to find the following material both screwy and alarming.

Let's start with Alfredo Angulo's methodical pulverization of Andre Tsurkan in Temecula, California, on HBO's *Boxing After Dark*. On paper, the match looked reasonable enough. Due to Tsurkan's heavy hands, he had a legitimate shot at beating the odds in the early going. But by round eight, this gruesome 10-rounder had grown so lopsided, I half-expected one of the agitated HBO analysts—Jim Lampley, Max Kellerman, or Lennox Lewis—to jump onto the ring apron to stop it.

PHOTO BY JOE MIRANDA

Angulo-Tsurkan should have been stopped earlier

By the time Tsurkan's corner signaled surrender to referee Tony Krebs and steered its brave, dazed, busted-up fighter to safety, there were only 33 seconds left in the contest. But let me tell you, Tsurkan, porous as his defense was, looked like Willy Pep in his prime compared to a fighter who competed a week earlier in Carson, California.

On the undercard of the Shane Mosley-Ricardo Mayorga show at The Home Depot Center was a pathetic bout that should live in infamy, but because it wasn't televised, only 5,798 fans saw it. Hang around this business long enough and you'll see some pretty ugly mismatches, but this one was so pitiful it was like watching the Cubs in post-season play.

Golden Boy Promotions had signed and brought over an undefeated middleweight from Scotland, Craig McEwan, and, after scouring the earth for a suitable opponent, found him in Parma, Idaho, where resides Hilario Lopez, 10-6 (1).

Lopez, facing a bona fide 160-pounder in McEwan, had turned pro in 2004 as a super lightweight and fought most of his career around 140. Apparently having learned all his defensive techniques from *Rocky* movies, he seemed to think it was against the rules to lift his gloves higher than his

PHOTO BY CASEY HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

McEwan pounds mismatched Lopez

chest, which made blocking shots pretty much out of the question. With his ability to slip a punch roughly equivalent to that of a dead guy trying to dodge a bullet, his defensive skills were on a level with one of those zebras you see being devoured by a lion on the Discovery Channel.

But the terribly limited fighter from Idaho was determined. He kept throwing punches and daring McEwan to keep slaughtering him, which he did. Lopez' corner, referee Ray Corona, and the California commission let the beating continue for its scheduled eight rounds. Either Lopez has a magnificent chin, McEwan has no power, or both. By the time you read this, we should be better informed on that. Lions Angulo and McEwan, having each feasted on his respective zebra, were scheduled to fight each other November 22 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas on the undercard of Ricky Hatton-Paul Malignaggi.

If the state commission enforced Section 18733 of its own rules, these miserable contests would have been stopped much earlier. "The referee," it says, "shall stop a contest when a contestant shows a marked superiority, or is apparently outclassed."

I called Commissioner John Frierson about this because somewhere or other Frierson's picked up this odd habit of telling the truth. I don't expect it will get him terribly far in this business.

"I know the rule," he told me, "but if you stop a fight because the guy is not holding his gloves up or something like that, we could be in deep trouble on an appeal. A four-rounder or a six-rounder is more likely to get stopped, but when it gets up to eight rounds or more and you have a promoter putting up (more) money for these fights, we don't want to run these promoters away."

See? When's the last time you saw anyone from a commission actually admit what everybody knows? Experience has taught commissions and promoters that fans in attendance want blood, and when they're deprived, there's hell to pay. The referees, Frierson said, "get gun-shy [of calling a halt], especially if the commissioners or the executive officer (Armando Garcia) is at the fight. I promise you I'll bring this up at the next meeting though."

"I have to tell you," Frierson added, "Tony Krebs is not on Garcia's list of favorites, and that would make him even more gun-shy." Garcia, you may recall from previous columns, won his present position about three years ago, beating out fellow-finalist referee Pat Russell. Shortly after moving into his new office, Garcia made Russell's referee assignments scarcer than bar mitzvah bacon.

Frierson had backed Russell for the job, but the victorious Garcia, Frierson recently informed me, had been championed by then-Commissioner Mike Carona, who put together enough votes to win. Carona was Orange County

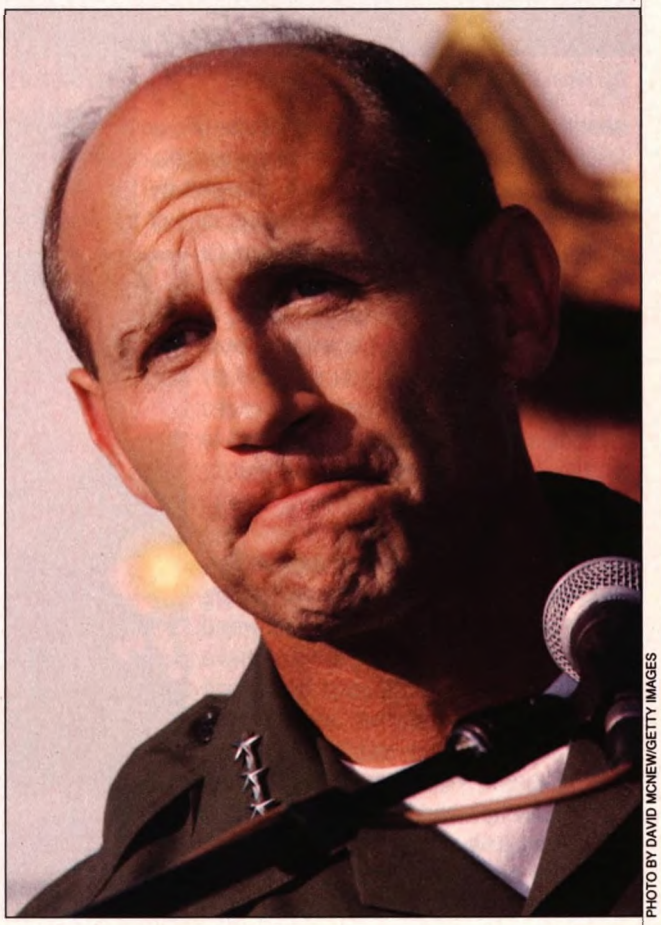


PHOTO BY DAVID MCNEW/GETTY IMAGES

Former Orange County Sheriff Carona

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Did referee O'Connor mishandle Prescott-Khan?

sheriff at the time. Carona quit his sheriff's post in January 2008 after he, his wife, and his mistress (you couldn't make this stuff up if you tried) were charged by the U.S. Attorney's Office with illegally accepting tens of thousands of dollars in cash and gifts from influence seekers. The alleged gifts included, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, at least one outing to Las Vegas for a boxing show. This is what you call guilt by association. In other words, it proves nothing against Garcia. It's just fun to know. By the way, heck of a job, Schwarzy.

Magoo Two: British referee Terry O'Connor. Too often we see fighters giving additional smacks to a downed opponent. How flagrant does this have to get before someone does something about it? Breidis Prescott, after toppling Amir Khan with a left hook at the M.E.N. Arena in Manchester, England, stood over him and hammered him with an overhand right. Khan was so stretched out that Prescott had to reach way down to find him, as though he were punching a grounded squirrel. Totally out of bounds. Prescott should have been DQ'd on the spot. At the very least, O'Connor should have taken a couple of points and given Khan recovery time. Strange but true, Khan was the house fighter.

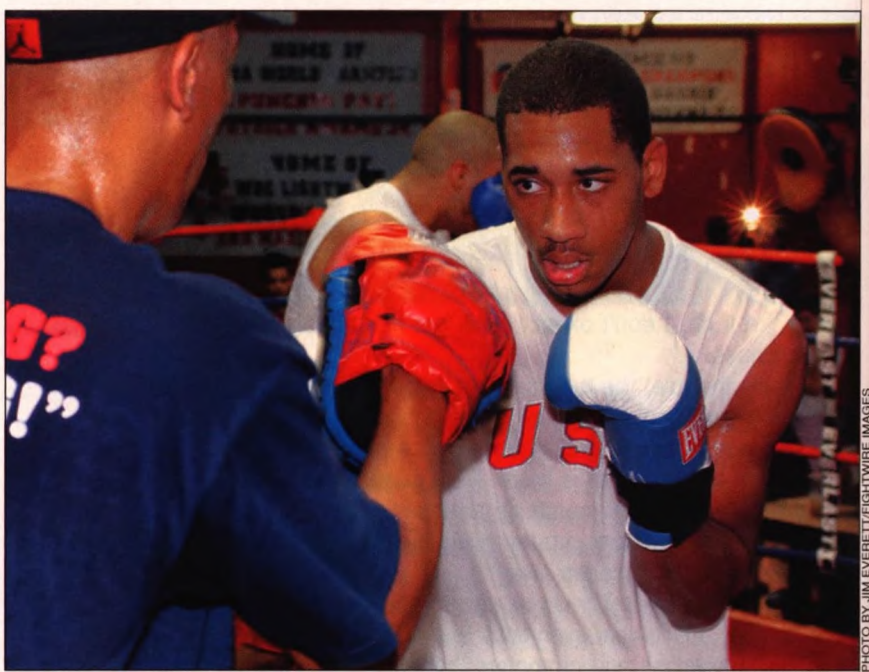


PHOTO BY JIM EVERETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Heavily hyped Andrade preps for pro debut

Magoo Three: Khan's promoter, Frank Warren. You put this thing on pay-per-view?

Slow Down a Minute: U.S. Olympian Demetrius Andrade is turning pro with such a full-court press of gaudy promotional activity that it's reminiscent of Great Britain's Khan (See "Magoo Two" above), another talented amateur who had a powerful publicity apparatus behind him. Khan seemed to think the lightweight championship would be his by divine right.

I have no doubt that Andrade, a junior middleweight from Providence, Rhode Island, has talent, but it's awfully early for a coronation. That kind of build-up can do a young fighter a lot of harm and no good at all.

As for Khan, once again we shouldn't write off a fighter over one crummy outing, even when it consists, as it did for Khan, of being taken out in round one by a barely known Colombian. (Aren't these hotshot matchmakers ever going to learn? The last thing you want to gamble against is a barely known Colombian.) Anyway, to prove Amir's career is not over, consider John Ruiz. David Tua once kayoed him seconds after the opening bell in a highly anticipated fight, but umpteen years later you still couldn't get Ruiz out of the ratings with a crowbar. Which leads me to the following admission: Though I still loathe Ruiz' double-ugly fighting style, I have grudgingly come to admire his perseverance and willingness to wrestle any boxer in the heavyweight division.

$$$$$$: In an early indication that boxing can't bob and weave its way out of worldwide economic chaos, billionaire Sumner Redstone was forced to sell 20 percent of his beaten-down CBS stock to raise cash to pay his debts. CBS owns major fight impresario Showtime. And Bob Arum, citing the global meltdown, said he wasn't sure whether HBO, owned by the hurting Time Warner, would be so quick to underwrite cards as easily as it did in the past. "They're all running scared now," he said.

PHOTO BY MATTHIAS KERN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Klitschko pecks at Peter during Showtime double-dip

Futches: First, Showtime's Jim Gray. I'm still reading and hearing complaints about his abrasive interviews, but he's mostly cooled it for some time now, and he doesn't get sufficient credit for his knowledge and mellower attitude, which he showed again conducting worthwhile on-the-spot ring interviews after Chad Dawson brilliantly decisioned a never-say-die Antonio Tarver.

Second, Showtime, for giving us Vitali Klitschko's spectacular outing against Samuel Peter in Berlin the same night it gave us Dawson-Tarver in Las Vegas. Showtime, on a much smaller budget, manages to hang right in there with HBO. And its undersized but tough *ShoBox* has given us first looks at too many eventual world-beaters to list here.

Third, Vitali Klitschko, who at age 37 looked very much like a 22-year-old Muhammad Ali, daring the dangerous Peter to come after him by hanging his left glove below his waist. He got away with it all night because of his speed, destructive power, agility, and perfect ring generalship. It didn't hurt that because Klitschko was a head taller, Peter couldn't reach him with those rabbit punches he's so fond of. But when's the last time anyone saw a heavyweight as capable as Vitali? I don't know how long this injury-prone fighter can keep it going, but the destroyer we saw that night could hang with any heavyweight who ever put on gloves. ■

[Camera Clicks]

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Houston, we have a gimmick! When the Oscar De La Hoya-Manny Pacquiao press tour rolled into Houston, Yao Ming wasn't available to pose for a photo with the fighters, so they got the next best thing. And thankfully, unlike the goat on Pacquiao's last tour, the astronaut didn't go to the bathroom on the dais. (Or at least if he did, it was safely contained within his suit.)

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

It looks like we can go ahead and remove the "only" from Don King's favorite catchphrase. At the recent Vitali Klitschko-Samuel Peter fight in Berlin, Germany, the Hall of Fame promoter reminded us that he's also a Hall of Fame suck-up by gathering as many different flags as he could get his hands on. Yes, he still loves America. But when it comes to having relationships with other countries, let's just say Don and America have an understanding.

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

No truth to the rumor that when the Pussycat Dolls performed at the Klitschko-Peter fight at the O2 World Arena, Michael Buffer introduced them as "five people who will put on a better show than Sam Peter." Another acceptable description would be "five people who have nicer legs than Sam Peter."

PHOTO BY RYAN PIERSE/GETTY IMAGES FOR LAUREUS

The next Calzaghe and Hatton? Two local kids in London warm up for a workout at the Fight For Peace Academy, which attempts to provide constructive alternatives for children in disadvantaged communities to keep them off the streets and out of trouble. We have to say, Mini-Calzaghe's uppercut looks pretty sharp, and Mini-Ricky is even better than Big Ricky at keeping his hands up.

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

You know the fight is not going well when your opponent has succeeded in transforming you from a human into a walrus. Firat Arslan had a rough night against Guillermo Jones in September and eventually surrendered his cruiserweight belt in the 10th round, but not before having a couple of cotton swabs shoved up his nose and saying "Coo-coo-ca-choo" a few times.

By Don Stewart

Victor Ortiz Junior Welterweight

Throughout their September bout, Roberto Arrieta talked smack to Victor Ortiz whenever he got a chance. The overmatched Argentinean journeyman must have figured his best chance of pulling an upset was to get inside the kid's head.

Arrieta was dropped three times and never saw the sixth round.

If he'd have done his homework, Arrieta would have realized that by dissing the junior welterweight prospect, he might as well have decided to feed a starving bear. Doubts, putdowns. Ortiz has heard them his entire life. They've only made him hungrier.

"The more people who have told me, 'You're not gonna, you won't,' those are the people who have just propelled me a little more," Ortiz said. "So I guess I owe a thank you to all the negative people in my life, because I've just used them as fuel."

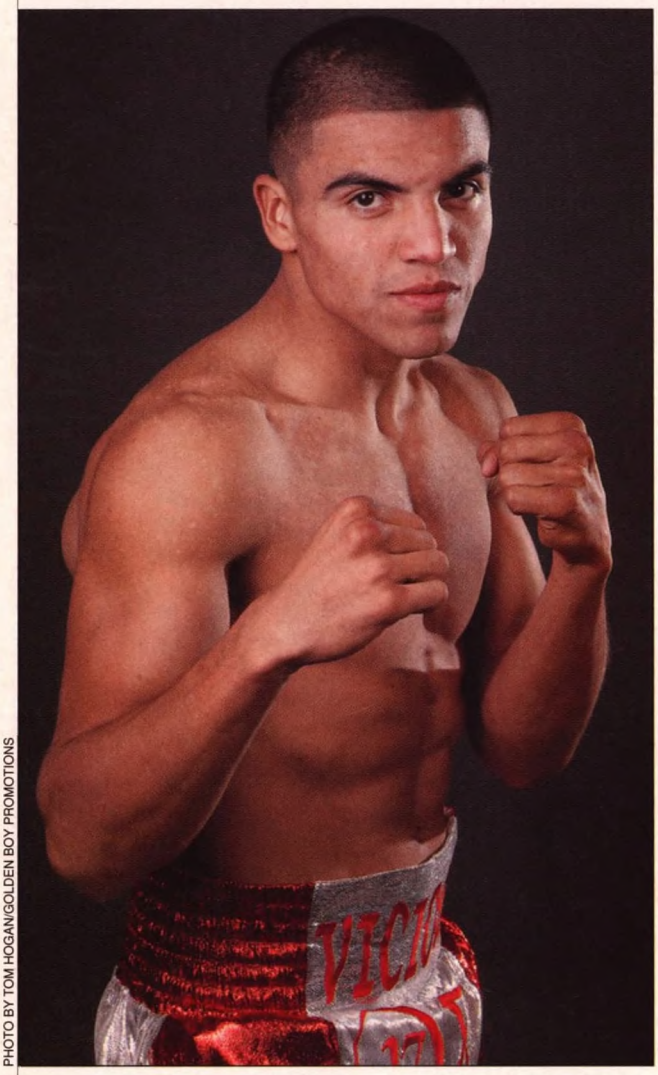


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

A skilled southpaw slugger, Ortiz endured a childhood packed with enough negatives for several lifetimes. Maybe that's why he's gone so far, from picking alfalfa as an impoverished Mexican kid in Kansas farm fields to walking the red carpet with Oscar De La Hoya in Los Angeles. Maybe that's why his potential now seems so limitless that some are dubbing him the next "Golden Boy."

He's a 21-year-old with 24 pro fights, but "Vicious Victor" says he's ready to take on world champion Ricky Hatton or any of the beltholders at 140 pounds. After what he's lived through, no fighter is going to intimidate Ortiz.

"The hardest things that can happen to a person," Ortiz said, "have already happened to me."

Ortiz saw his childhood suddenly shattered at age seven, when his mother ran off with another man. Ortiz' father was immediately broken, so much so that the children—Victor, older sister Carmen, and younger brother Temo—became afterthoughts. The big man Victor idolized began coming home drunk and beating him on a regular basis. The family tumbled into poverty.

Still, Victor was turning into a good little fighter. Introduced to boxing by his father at age seven after getting beaten up at school, Victor won his first 23 amateur bouts. He then dropped a decision in his opponent's hometown. It happened to be the first time his father was in the audience.

"He whipped my ass in front of everybody," said Victor, who remembers his father telling him: "You ain't s___, you should quit."

Victor was just eight at the time.

Four years later, Victor's father had completely disap-

(Continued on Page 116)

Pro Record

2004		
June 4	Raul Montes, Las Vegas, NV	KO 1
July 24	Alejandro Nungaray, Laughlin, NV	W 4
Sept. 17	Lee De Leon, Las Vegas	KO 2
Oct. 8	Charles Hawkins, Laughlin	KO 4
Nov. 26	Juan Patino, Las Vegas	W 4
2005		
Feb. 11	Joel Ortega, San Diego, CA	KO 1
March 5	Rodney Jones, Las Vegas	KO 2
June 3	Corey Alarcon, Oxnard, CA	L Disq. 1
Aug. 26	Oliver Bolanos, Houston, TX	W 4
Sept. 9	Kevin Carmody, Laughlin	W 6
Nov. 4	Donnell Logan, Ventura, CA	KO 2
2006		
Jan. 6	Leroy Fountain, Bernalillo, NM	KO 4
Feb. 10	Nestor Rosas, San Antonio, TX	KO 5
March 31	Freddie Barrera, Maywood, CA	KO 1
June 23	Orlando Cantera, Nogales, AZ	KO 4
Sept. 8	Alfred Kotey, Dallas, TX	W 8
Nov. 3	Yahir Aguiar, Nogales	KO 2
2007		
Jan. 19	Marvin Cordova, Phoenix, AZ	Tech. Draw 1
April 14	Tomas Barrientez, San Antonio	KO 5
June 29	Maximino Cuevas, Camp Verde, AZ	KO 1
Aug. 30	Emmanuel Clottey, Houston	KO 10
Nov. 10	Carlos Maussa, New York, NY	KO 1
2008		
May 3	Dario Esalas, Carson, CA	KO 5
Sept. 13	Roberto Arrieta, Las Vegas	KO 5

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
24	22	1	1	17

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The Klitschkos Close In On Their Dream,

but...

WILL WE EVER CROWN A HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMP?

By Brian Doogan

In a quiet, residential area of Hamburg in September 2002, Vitali Klitschko opened his home to himself and his brother, Wladimir, in which their shared dream of dominance over the world's heavyweights was expressly articulated. "We have the same family name and our biggest aim is to hold two title belts together," said Wladimir. "Both of us have the same dream."

Six years later, by an unforeseeable route, the giants from Ukraine have virtually completed their remarkable journey, reflected in their respective positions atop THE RING's ratings, with younger brother Wladimir holding down the number-one spot, and Vitali at number two.

Vitali's capture of the WBC heavyweight title against Samuel Peter, whom THE RING rated number two in the division prior to their encounter, completed an

Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko display their collection of heavyweight hardware (below) following Vitali's TKO of Samuel Peter to regain the WBC strap (left). As the brothers will never fight each other, Vitali's return to action makes it unlikely that there will be a clear-cut world champion in the immediate future.

PHOTOS BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Vitali was noncommittal about his future following the victory over Peter, but said the fight he wants more than any other is a rematch with retired heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis. When they fought in 2003, Vitali fought very well before a very serious cut over his let eye forced a stoppage.

unprecedented return. Muhammad Ali and George Foreman both came back after long lay-offs—3½ years and 10 years, respectively—to win the heavyweight crown. Mike Tyson, after four years out of the ring, won the WBC and WBA titles. But no heavyweight in history who tried to reclaim the title in his first fight back—Jim Jeffries, who challenged Jack Johnson; Joe Louis, who challenged Ezzard Charles; Ali when he came back again to challenge Larry Holmes; Holmes when he came out of retirement to challenge Tyson—had ever been successful. Until Kitschko.

Say what you will about fragmented titles and the current plight of heavyweight boxing, Klitschko's comeback after almost four years out of the ring is an outstanding achievement. Whether it is good for the sport is another matter.

Peter's performance at the O2 World Arena in Berlin was pitiful. There are burglars who have encountered more difficulty with an open door and an empty house than Klitschko did in prying the WBC belt out of Peter's ham-fisted hands. In fact, Peter did a better job of holding on to it at the prefight press conference when he snatched the belt out of Klitschko's grip, put on his best Tyson face and snarled, "It's not yours, I'm telling you, it's not yours."

In chronological terms, he was right, of course. It is just a shame that he failed to show a similar sense of purpose once the bell rang.

Of course, the state of heavyweight boxing or the multitude of titles on offer is no fault of the Klitschkos. They are exemplary ambassadors for their sport, representing UNESCO, a United Nations organization that operates projects worldwide to provide education for disadvantaged children, holding PhDs from the Kiev National University for Sport and Physical Fitness, and leading the fight to bring democracy to their country.

During his four-year absence from the ring, Vitali stood shoulder to shoulder with Viktor Yuschenko, the leader of the Orange Revolution, as they addressed a rally of 250,000 people in Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) in the center of Kiev. Speaking directly after Yuschenko, he applauded the people who came onto the streets after then Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych had tried to steal the presidential election "by falsifying results." When Yuschenko came to power in the rerun election and Klitschko had been forced to retire from boxing after undergoing knee surgery, he campaigned for mayor of Kiev and won 25 percent of the vote, polling second to Leonid Chernovetsky and ahead of the incumbent Oleksandr Omelchenko. He was elected as a people's deputy to Kiev City Council. He is the most

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Vitali connected with hard right hands in the opening round, which could very well have discouraged Peter from launching any sort of sustained offense as the bout progressed. Although the so-called "Nigerian Nightmare" never went down, he lost virtually every second of every round.

politically involved world heavyweight titleholder since.

Sure, people who express the opinion that a victory for Peter would have been better for boxing are entitled to their view. If he had won by spectacular knockout, they would probably be right, especially if a rematch with Klitschko's younger brother could be forced through quickly with the vacant RING belt on the line.

If Peter were, let's say, the prime-time Tyson, he would undoubtedly have made it happen. But the reality, which all of us know now, is that Peter, even if he had managed to stop Klitschko, would still be the same Peter who knocked down Wladimir three times during the course of their bout in September 2005 and just about lost every other minute of the fight. Flawed victories over James Toney, Jameel McCline, and Oleg Maskaev were no real barometer.

"The Nigerian Nightmare" might as well be a strong guy taken in off the street, gloved up because he looks the part, and instructed to do his best to land a haymaker. That is how he fought against Wladimir Klitschko and, three years later, against Vitali. If you did not know, you would have guessed that Peter was the fellow coming off a four-year sabbatical.

All hope of a unified heavyweight championship is on hold, temporarily. Klitschko vs. Klitschko will never happen. Klitschko the elder vs. Nicolay Valuev, the WBA titleholder, is possible, though KItitschko will have to face Germany-based Cuban and mandatory challenger Juan Carlos Gomez by mid-January, if he is to hold on to the WBC title. The showdown he desires above all others is a rematch with retired 43-year-old Lennox Lewis, against whom he was leading on the scorecards when horrifically deep cuts around his left eye stopped their June 2003 bout six rounds.

"Whether or not I am going to continue my sports career, I am not ready to give a definite answer," Klitschko said after his win over Peter. "There must be a motivation in any business, a motivation for further fights. If I defend the title, these fights must cause a drive and give me motivation to prove that I am the strongest. If Lennox Lewis makes this decision to fight, with all of my pleasure I will give this opportunity to Lewis, to myself, and millions of spectators. I have big hopes, big hopes for a second fight with Lewis. I want to give the world the fight they all want to see.

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Making excellent use of his height and reach advantage, Vitali repeatedly tagged Peter with punishing left jabs. Although there was nothing even approaching an exciting exchange, the crowd of more than 12,000 fans at Berlin's 02 World Arena thoroughly enjoyed Klitschko's performance.

"You know, I'm very thankful to Lewis. He gave me a chance to prove my skills against the strongest heavyweight in the world. He is the strongest man I have ever faced and I have almost 20 years of fighting experience. It would be so interesting to do it again.

"Henry Maske came back to regain his title after 10 years out of the ring. If a fighter has skills, he never loses them. It would only take Lewis a few months to get back in top condition. He will never lose his skills. You either have them or you don't, and Lewis is like me, he lives a healthy lifestyle, he doesn't smoke or take any drugs. So I have big hopes he will want to fight me again."

But in an interview with the *Sunday Times* earlier this year in Berlin, Lewis insisted that, although he had considered coming back, there is no chance that he would return to the ring now. "Yes, I did consider making a comeback," he revealed. "I thought about it whenever I watched the other heavyweights out there, but I talked myself out of it almost in the same breath: *Do I really need to do it? I've accomplished all that I need to accomplish, so I don't need to do this again.* Some people said I should have fought Klitschko again, but what for? I beat him and there will always be somebody out there, someone else to fight, but I've created a legacy, so why put it all at risk? I'm one of only three heavyweights ever to retire on top [Gene Tunney and Rocky Marciano also retired as reigning heavyweight champions] and that's important to me. That's history."

Which leaves Klitschko where exactly?

"There is only one belt left, which is with Valuev," he said. "I think a fight against Valuev could be the only interesting one, apart from the fight against Lewis. He is a huge guy, the biggest heavyweight ever, and I want me and my brother to hold all four belts. But who is Valuev compared to Lewis?"

Indeed. Klitschko vs. Valuev does not exactly set the pulse racing, but it may be the only challenge that, for Klitschko, is worth fighting for. His reputation, after all, has been solidified by the way in which dominated Peter,

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Unmarked after his first fight in 3½ years, the 37-year-old Vitali performed remarkably well against Peter, showing no rust or deterioration of skills whatsoever. But perhaps most noteworthy was the fact that he got through training camp and the fight without injury.

253½, Las Vegas, Nevada, via Akwaibom, Nigeria, and persuaded him to quit on his stool after eight rounds, two months shy of four years since he stopped British challenger Danny Williams in his only defense of THE RING heavyweight title. Peter won the WBC belt by stopping Maskaev in March, but his tenure proved to be short-lived. Klitschko's boxing ability was far superior and, in hitting Peter hard and early, he appeared to destroy the Nigerian's ambition, assuming he had one.

As for a plan, Peter, 30-2 (23), was guileless. In the opening minute, Klitschko, 36-2 (35), landed an overhand right to the jaw that staggered Peter and he hurt him again with another right to the chin before a left hook crashed off Peter's jaw. The 6'7½" Ukrainian exploited to the full his seven-inch advantage in height while Peter seemed pacifistic in comparison. His impotence was astonishing, especially given Klitschko's inactivity. His timing was off and he remained on the receiving end of hard shots from Klitschko's fists for much of round two, particularly his left jab. If he had not appeared to be wholly dispirited when he walked back to his corner after the first round, then he did at the end of the second.

The one-sided action continued into round three as Klitschko measured Peter with his right hand and the squat titleholder struggled for any rhythm. Peter came forward in the fourth, but Klitschko continued to pick him off with his jab and he slammed in several more right crosses to Peter's face, which betrayed signs of swelling around his eyes. All three judges had Klitschko ahead by 40-36 at the end of the round, which was declared openly under the WBC's wacky rules.

Two more right hands and a left hook shook Peter in the fifth as the Nigerian's frustration grew and he failed to make any inroads over the next three rounds. One judge, Thailand's Anek Hongtongkam, who deserves to be named and shamed, managed to award him one round, but at the end of the eighth, after hearing that he was so far behind on the judges' scorecards, Peter told his trainer, Stacy McKinley, "I'm through."

It was a suitably inglorious ending to a lamentable display, which begged serious questions as to how assiduous he had been in his preparations. We know that he cannot box to save his life, but we expected him to show effort at least. Ultimately, The Nigerian Nightmare could do nothing to impinge upon the Klitschkos' dream.

Where, precisely, this leaves the heavyweights is debatable. Both Klitschkos are fine, upstanding men, and, over a period of years, they have proved their worth and, alas, their limitations. A celebration has taken place in the Klitschko household, but a new, golden era has not yet dawned.■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.

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Perfect Execution, Indeed

BERNARD HOPKINS

We'll Never See The Likes Of Him Again

"They built the Titanic to be one of a kind,
But many ships have ruled the seas
They built the Eiffel tower to stand alone,
But they could build another, if they pleased
The Taj Mahal, the Pyramids of Egypt are unique, I suppose,
But when they built you brother, they broke the mold"

—Bruce Springsteen, "Terry's Son"

By William Dettloff

You never would have believed we were about 65 miles from the town where Bernard Hopkins was born. It's only about an hour from Atlantic City to Philadelphia, more if you get off the Expressway and take in all the wonderful back-road scenery, which consists principally of miles and miles of low-rent garages, convenience stores, saloons, bungalows, and other assorted dingy hideouts and alleyways.

Hopkins rocks Pavlik with one of the numerous bombs he landed en route to a magnificent upset victory over the reigning middleweight champion. Watching his brilliant performance, it was hard to believe that B-Hop is 43 and has been a pro since 1988.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

It sounded like every one of the 11,332 souls in Boardwalk Hall booed, lustily and with great vigor, when the Hall's giant overhead screen cut to a scene of Hopkins warming up prior to his monumental 12-round win over Kelly Pavlik on October 18. Conversely, the building shook with cheers when the cameras cut to Pavlik, looking confident and stoic alongside his trainer, Jack Loew.

The difference was even more pronounced during their ring walks. The deep, spine-rumbling base that is the result of thousands of simultaneous, diaphragm-driven "boos!" swept over the Hall like a dark, enveloping wave, easily drowning out cheers for Hopkins, if there were any. It was impossible to tell. Pavlik, meanwhile, was received like a returning war hero, his legions of young Ohio ruffians eager to watch him administer a serious beat-down, Youngstown-style.

We were really just an hour from Philly?

Any fighter who's gone on the road and fought in towns other than his own knows what it's like to be booed heartily and with great joy. That's sport. That's the way this road show works. That's the business. But to be booed so passionately and commandingly an hour from where you played ball in the park and ran in the streets and went to school and dated and became a man? It's not supposed to work that way, and your average fighter put in that sad position could be forgiven for entering the ring a little demoralized, if not already defeated.

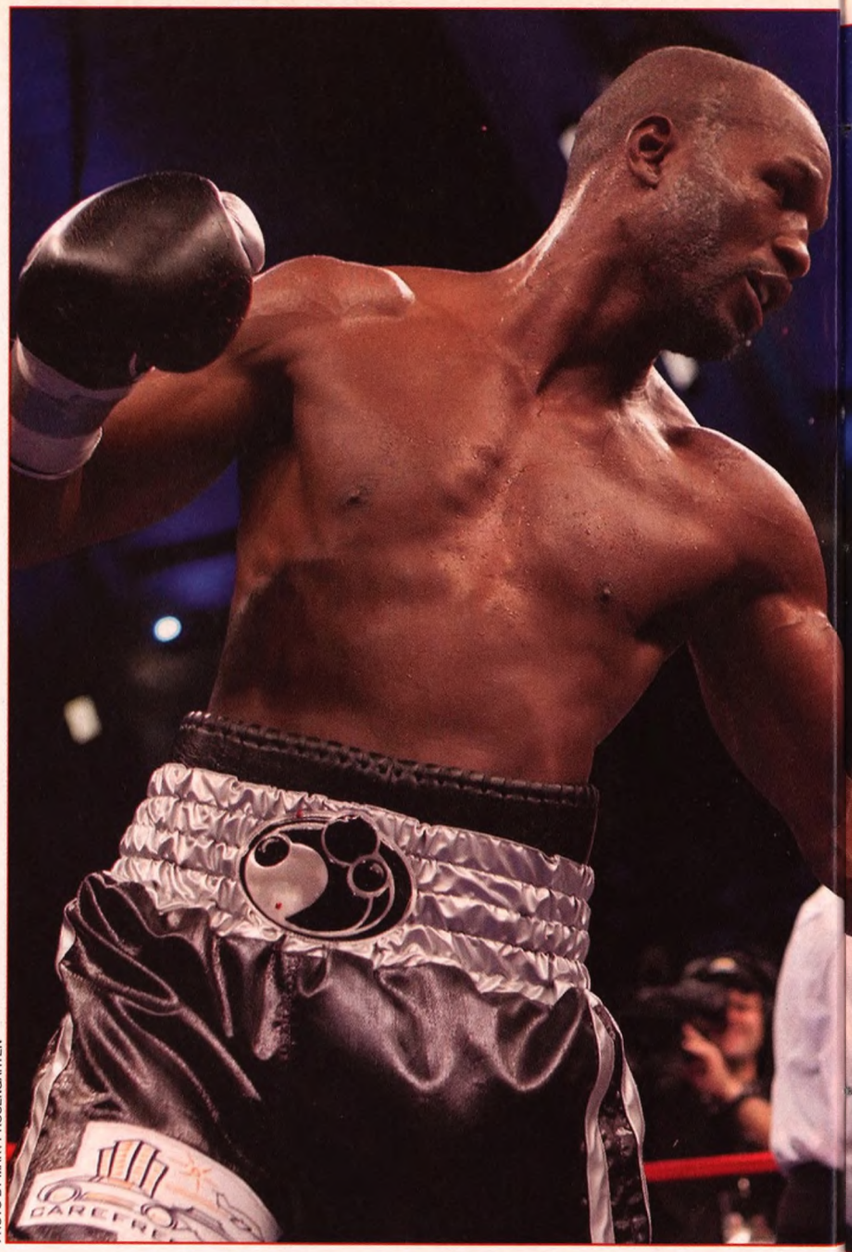


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Instead of the defensive strategy many were expecting, Hopkins took the fight to Pavlik from the start, banging home hard left hooks to the body. By the end of the first round, the right side of Pavlik's ribcage was already bright red.

But then, Bernard Hopkins is not your average prizefighter, 43 years old or otherwise. He's not your average anything. There's nothing average about him. Chances are very good that he is shrewder than you are, braver than you are, tougher than you are, and much, much, wealthier. We already know he's a better fighter than you are. We know that he's more disciplined than you are and harder-headed, yes, and more famous, in better shape (far, far better shape) and will be in a Hall of Fame some day. You will not.

Maybe you can throw a baseball farther, or cook better eggplant parmigiana. Big deal. On the whole, he is much farther away from average than you or anyone else you know personally. We, each of us, are in the same boat.

What's worse, we know and regret to tell you that when you leave your job someday, or it leaves you, you will be replaced and shortly thereafter forgotten entirely. Some other mostly anonymous drone will fill your cubicle and things will go on as if you never existed. There will be a new guy. There will always be a new guy, for all of us. But there will never be another Bernard Hopkins. Not even someone like him. Not in our lifetime. Maybe when our grandkids are grown, maybe then. Wait. No, not then either.

Of course, Hopkins is not shy about telling you this himself, figuratively or literally.

"You're going to miss me when I'm gone," he told the assembled and mostly crow-eating press after overcoming 4-1 odds and trouncing Pavlik over 12 wholly one-sided rounds. He needn't have repeated it; he'd made it very clear in the whipping he gave Pavlik that we will indeed miss him when he's gone, but you could forgive him for repeating himself. We keep forgetting.

There are many, Loew among them, who will ascribe to Pavlik's impotence to contest having been fought at a catchweight of 170 pounds. After it was over, Loew partook of the curious and decades-old practice of proclaiming "no excuses" and at the same time offering what else but an excuse.

"You can't take anything away from Bernard, he fought a great fight tonight. It just wasn't our night—no excuses," he said, and followed up with, "I don't think 170 pounds is our weight class, but no excuses. We took a shot at a legend, that's what we wanted to do. We took our shot."

Loew, who spoke at the press conference while his fighter went to the hospital to get stitches that we must

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

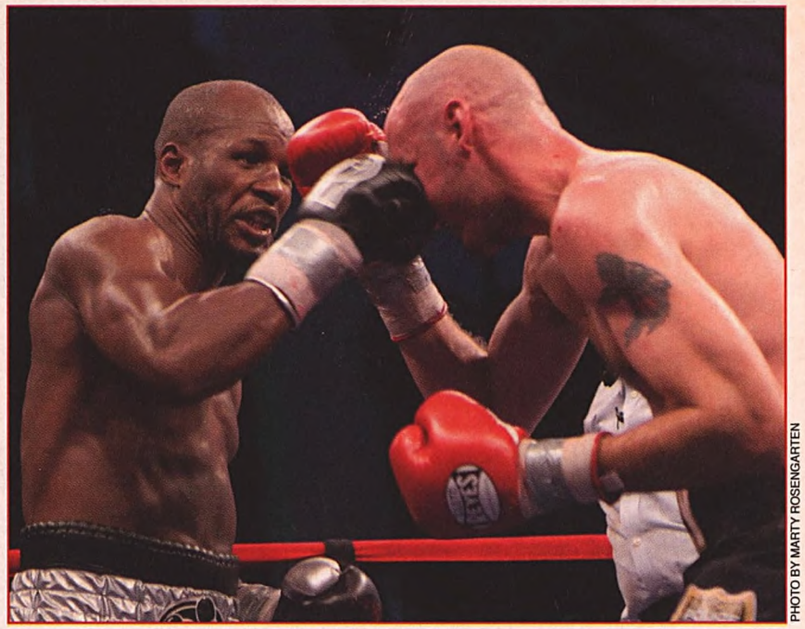


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

A living legend at work: It didn't matter whether he was throwing the right hand (above) or the left (left), Hopkins was on target throughout the fight. In many ways, it was reminiscent of his 2001 victory over Felix Trinidad, another fight in which the Philadelphian was the underdog.

presume from his absence required emergency application, talked about Pavlik not having anything on his punches, having no hand speed, no ability to bend at the legs.

In short, he had nothing, which, aside from implications of poisoning, sounds suspiciously like the excuse offered by Antonio Tarver when he, like Pavlik, was favored to beat Hopkins and was promptly administered the beating of his life. It is a remarkable coincidence of nature that a fighter often loses everything he has on the very same night he happens to get into the ring with an opponent who is stronger, tougher, and better than he is.

Whatever the case, from appearances it looked as though the two could have fought at any weight between 120 and 280 pounds and Hopkins would have won. He set the tone when, at the opening bell he went right to Pavlik and backed him up with hooks and bodypunches. It was surprising not only to the crowd, but surely to Pavlik as well.

"They anticipated me backing up, grabbing, holding, and running, so I wanted to come out fast, pushing Kelly back," said Hopkins, 49-5 (32) with 1 no-contest. "Kelly Pavlik cannot fight, I feel, backing up, successfully. Not comfortably; he comes forward."

It is very close to the observation Pavlik, 34-1 (30), once made in happier times, about his kayo of Edison Miranda, which now seems so long ago. But Hopkins had no intention of standing right in Pavlik's punching range all night; he's no dummy. Displaying the versatility, smarts, and gumption that mark him as the game's premier technician, he varied his attack throughout, some of the time standing with Pavlik, others using the ring, but never languishing and always punching in combination, especially on the rare occasion when Pavlik landed a blow.

It is a testament to Pavlik's youth and earnestness that he lasted the full route, so comprehensive was the thrashing he received. It was so one-sided that the judges all were in relatively close agreement as to the margin of victory, a rare occurrence these days. They turned in scores of 119-106 (Alan Rubenstein), 118-108 (Steve Weisfeld), and 117-109 (Barbara Perez). THE RING saw it 119-106.

Indeed, the drama came primarily at about the bout's midway point, when everyone, not least of all Pavlik, started to watch for signs that Hopkins was slowing down, as he did so precipitously over the second half of his loss to Joe Calzaghe last April. Along with Pavlik, we waited. And waited. It didn't happen and so it is no coincidence that around this same time that the Hopkins contingent, so overwhelmed by the Pavlik armies earlier and maybe a little afraid to believe fully that the old man could do it and therefore reluctant to raise their voices, began to stand up.

They saluted every Hopkins combination, of which there were many, with raucous cheers. "It's okay, we can believe," you could almost hear them thinking. Every member of a ringside section to the right of press row stood and crisscrossed their forearms in front of their faces, as Hopkins did when he entered the ring adorned, for the first time in years, with the old "Executioner" garb.

Now it was the Pavlik crowd that was cowed, and down the stretch, when it was clear the upset would happen, the chants of "B-Hop! B-Hop!' rolled around the arena, echoed off the stands and through the souls and hearts of everyone who knew the full length of the dark concrete earth that stretches from the boardwalk to North Philly.

There would be no late fade; Hopkins appeared as fresh in the last round as he had in the first and tried for and almost got the knockout he wanted.

"Normally when I know I got the lead, I just go ahead and try to win the fight," he said. "I've done well with my purses, but I just wanted to fight like a poor man; I wanted to go and finish it. Bodyshots broke him down earlier to set him up later. I wanted to step on the gas pedal and be out of character. And that was to fight hard the last two or three rounds. Yes, I held a couple times, but I'm 43 years old—I'm supposed to hold."

Strategic holding or not, there could be nothing to detract from the win over Pavlik, a 26-year-old buck and the world middleweight champion, with whom the fight world was rapidly falling in love. It is a historic win matched in its genre only by George Foreman's stoppage of Michael Moorer. But there is a difference between the two events.

"What George did is the greatest single accomplishment of any fighter beyond the age of 40 and from our way of thinking maybe the single greatest accomplishment of any athlete beyond the age of 40," said HBO's Jim Lampley. "To win the legitimate heavyweight championship of the world at age 45, I don't think you can match it with too many other things.

"But what Bernard did is the greatest performance from the beginning to the end of the fight, of any fighter ever over the age of 40. To put together 12 rounds like that—you couldn't conceive it."

It was a remarkable win, better even, Hopkins said afterward, than his career-defining upset stoppage of Felix Trinidad in 2001. It was hard not to recall that fight, when, before the decision was announced against Pavlik, Hopkins glared at the ringside press who had doubted him, just as he did after stopping Trinidad. For a moment, this man who survives—no, thrives—on the doubts others have about him, almost became emotional. Right there on the ring apron.

"I'm human," he said. "I fought back emotion because where I come from, and what I had to overcome from my own doing, in the penitentiary, you have to control your emotions or you're considered weak. And when you're a lamb around a bunch of wolves, you're finished. But I am human."

As if to change the subject, he returned to the theme that has sustained him.

"I'm tired of proving [myself] to the same nasayers; that motivates me. What, do I have to kill somebody? I'm the most underrated fighter when it comes to defense, when it comes to offense, when it comes to my heart ... and every time they say Bernard is old, yes I am. And they say Bernard is finished—they ain't saying that now."

One of the doubters was Freddie Roach, who made a stir by advising Hopkins to retire after the loss to Calzaghe, for which Roach trained

PHOTOS BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Note how defensive master Hopkins simultaneously ducks and deflects Pavlik's left jab. It's the sort of old-school move that B-Hop teaches in his monthly Ring column, "Perfect Execution" (see page 125).

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Instead of playing it safe down the stretch, Hopkins gunned hard for the knockout and inflicted quite a bit of punishment in the 12th round. But brave Pavlik sucked it up and lasted the distance, which earned him Hopkins' respect and some words of encouragement after the final bell.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

The soft side of The Executioner: Hopkins poses with his daughter, Latrece, following his victory over Pavlik. Despite this reputation as a hard man, when it comes to his family, Hopkins is a doting father and faithful husband.

him, and then expressing worry over the fact Hopkins went to the wrong corner four times in that match. His assessment of Hopkins' win over Pavlik was blunt.

"[It was] unexpected, but I was happy for him. He fought the fight of his life," Roach told THE RING. Asked what the difference was between the Hopkins that beat Pavlik and the one he trained for the close loss to Calzaghe, Roach replied, "I'm not sure. He has a thyroid problem and Mackie [Shillstone] tried to control it with diet for the Calzaghe fight. I've talked to doctors, and that's pretty hard to control with diet.

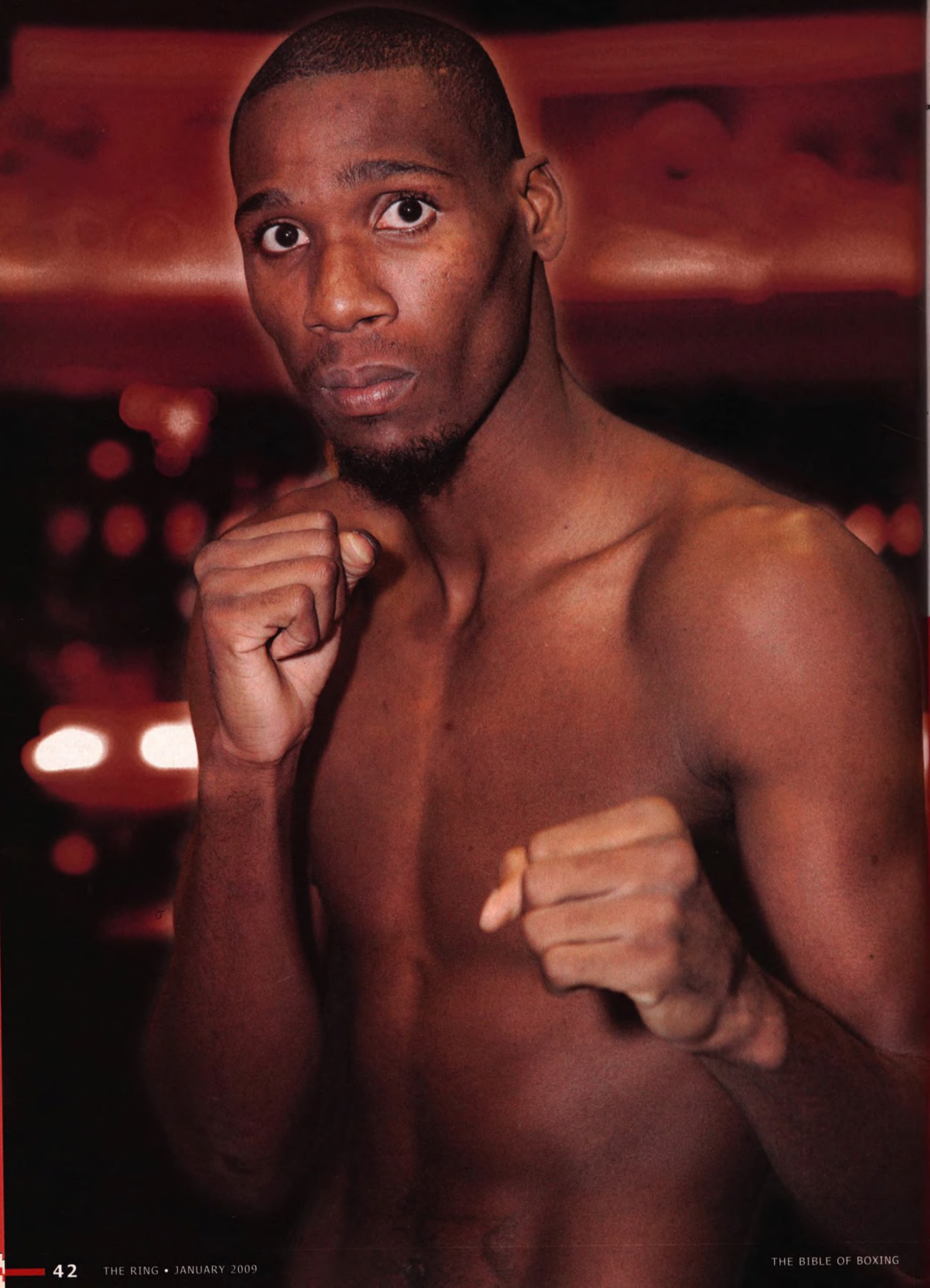
"He looked like a whole different person in there [with Pavlik], so I was thinking he must have taken care of that problem. I wasn't in camp with him this time, so it's hard to say from the outside, but he came in shape and he proved everybody wrong—or, at least me."

Hopkins told THE RING that tests run before the Calzaghe fight indicated he might have a thyroid problem, but he refused to blame his performance on it. He did say during the postfight press conference that activity, and nothing else, was the difference. In his words, "this old car is hard to keep starting up," so he wants to fight again in less than a year.

It doesn't matter what happens from here on. Hopkins has established himself among the great figures in the dirty little history of the prize ring, comparable to any fighter you can name in any era. He is one of them, in league with Sam Langford and Archie Moore, Joe Louis and Ray Robinson. More than anything, he is a 43-year-old fighter from Philadelphia, doing things in the ring that only the great ones have done.

"I wanted to let you know you have someone special amongst you and you all aren't going to realize it until I'm gone," Hopkins said. "It's always like that, in the history of any sport."

We realize it, Bernard. We do. ■



THE SOLUTION *to* PAUL WILLIAMS' PROBLEMS

Fight In Four Weight Classes!

Williams drills Antonio Margarito with a right uppercut en route to a 12-round decision victory in July 2007. Williams was eager to give "The Tijuana Tornado" a rematch in a bout that would fill The Ring championship vacancy at 147 pounds, but so far negotiations have been unsuccessful.

By David Mayo
PHOTOS BY JAN SANDERS

Paul Williams opted not to over-accessorize the 1973 Caprice Classic candy-apple convertible, because he didn't want to devalue the single most cherished toy to which he has treated himself. Other than the customized television sets for the headrests and sun visors, and the 22-inch rims to keep her riding low, you wouldn't notice much difference between the car today and when she first wheeled off a

Even though Williams nailed Carlos Quintana with punches like this, "The Punisher" was outboxed and lost a unanimous decision to Quintana in February 2008. But in their June rematch, Williams avenged his lone pro defeat with a spectacular first-round knockout.

Chevrolet dealer's lot eight years before he was born.

The car symbolizes Williams' nouveau-riche status. How he found it symbolizes something else.

Paul Williams is lucky. He was lucky to have a single-parent mother who still works in a steak house and doted over her four children. He was lucky to have a school-bus driver who happened to be an amateur boxing coach and knew exactly how to handle a rascal passenger. He was lucky to find an honest manager-trainer in his small hometown of Aiken, South Carolina, a man who once blew the whistle on a fight-fixing scandal that led to federal convictions, and who became a mentor beyond boxing. And he was very lucky to have astute handlers who demanded a rematch clause for what became his worst night as a professional—and very good in the one-round blowout that avenged that lone loss.

Then, there's the car. Oh, sure, Williams, who probably is the most-avoided southpaw in boxing today, already had a Tahoe and Crown Victoria. But the Caprice is his "dream come true." That is, after his nightmarish journey to obtain it.

"How I actually got that car, I had a box Chevy—of course, I had it sitting up on 24s and all that—and we drove it to Augusta for the fights one night at Bell Auditorium," Williams said. "I parked in front. But then, I went to the mall to buy a shirt. When I went back, I parked it in the back."

When he returned after the fights, his car was stolen. The next day, Williams saw the Caprice by the side of the road.

"The dude was moving overseas and had to sell his car, so I turned around in the road and bought it right there," he said. "Oh, man, it was a blessing for me. That's the car I had wanted. I was looking for them all over the Internet, but they were asking crazy money for them. Then, the day after my car got stolen, I happened to see one and I got it."

The one aspect of life to which Williams' good fortune does not extend is securing opponents. A much-anticipated rematch with Antonio Margarito—a loser to Williams in a riveting 12-round fight in 2007—would clarify a muddled picture in a jam-packed welterweight division, but has been dismissed by rival promoter Bob Arum, who said he declined to do further business with Williams' advisor, Al Haymon.

So the 27-year-old Williams adopted a hybrid role, willing to float between welterweight and middleweight to pursue the biggest fights. A proposal to face middleweight champi-

on Kelly Pavlik grew close before Arum turned to a Pavlik-Bernard Hopkins bout instead.

Williams, after losing a decision to Carlos Quintana in February 2008, followed by their 2 minute 15 second rematch, moved up to middleweight to score another one-round win, September 25, against Andy Kolle, at Soboba Casino in San Jacinto, California, driving his record to 35-1 (26). With a November 29 date scheduled against an opponent still unidentified at press time, Williams' victory over Kolle prompted debate about exactly where he plans to settle, weight-wise. His answer is nowhere, although he expects his November fight to be at welterweight.

"I'm just going to chase all the weight classes and make guys a little mad that I can win at 160, at 154, and at 147," he said. "If I could get the belts in all those weight classes, I would. I'm trying to make guys fight, but they won't fight. I'm to the point that I'm not going to be waiting around on this guy anymore. Everybody wants to see the rematch with Margarito. But he's not going to fight. They say he's the best and all that, but true boxing fans know that if you're the best, you'll fight the best. I lost a fight to Quintana, okay? But I came back and avenged his loss in good fashion. Why doesn't Margarito want to come back and avenge his loss?"

Williams never played another sport. He was eight when his school bus driver, Lee Wells, grew weary of the youngster's excess energy and encouraged Nancy Williams to allow her son to box at Wells' L.A.W. Boxing Club, now renamed Aiken Boxing Club. The mother, who worked 10 years in a textile mill before working the last nine years at Ryan's Steakhouse in Aiken, approved.

Wells instilled core principles in his new pupil. He died before finishing the task, just as Williams was getting into his teens and discovering girls.

Williams drifted away from boxing, and then returned after his mother showed him a newspaper article about some local Golden Gloves stars, and he realized what he was missing. He returned at 16. Within a year, he was talking about turning pro.

George Peterson was the only man in Aiken doing much with pros. Owner of an insurance company and 26 rental houses, Peterson had a long background in boxing, much of it in Washington, D.C., where he trained former welterweight contender Johnny Gant (who lost a 1975 title shot against Angel Espada) before moving to Aiken in '77. Peterson took a long respite from boxing before starting a gym in Aiken in '90. In '00, he surreptitiously taped a telephone conversation with

Winning combination: Williams celebrates with George Peterson, who has trained him since he was 18 years old. Their relationship goes much deeper than boxing, and Peterson has also helped guide the fighter in business and personal matters.

an estranged fighter in which Thomas Williams admitted a fight-fixing scheme with promoter Bobby Mitchell. Peterson turned over the tape to the FBI, leading to convictions and prison time when the fighter and promoter were convicted four years later on conspiracy and sports-bribery charges.

In early-'99, just before Paul Williams turned 18, he met his future manager-trainer at Final Round Gym, which Peterson operates out of a five-store strip mall he owns in Aiken.

Both men call it a father-son relationship. Peterson, 67, expresses as much concern for Williams outside the ring as in it. Moreover, Williams has adopted his mentor's real-estate entrepreneurialism. After buying a new home, Williams bought a four-unit apartment complex behind a shopping center in south Aiken, "the rich part of town." He owns both free and clear, and said he plans to buy another four-unit complex, adjacent to the first, with his next payday. He calls his growing real-estate acumen "my greatest achievement."

Peterson took Williams wherever they had to go for work. In Washington, D.C., Williams sparred with the likes of William Joppy, Robert Allen, O'Neil Bell, Teddy Reid, and Travis Simms from as young as 19, back when no rival managers or promoters were interested in him. That changed too.

"Paul has been a dream, as far as being loyal, because he has had people come to him all the time," Peterson said. "He's had business people give him the sales pitch. He's had trainers come after him, without my knowledge. It's all about loyalty. This young man closed his ears on all of that and decided that we started this thing together, we have a bond, and we were going all the way. It seldom happens, but I've met a few real people in boxing, just a few. But this young man is one. And whenever someone says something to him, he comes straight to me."

Williams said he frequently is told he needs to hire a big-name trainer to sharpen his skills. He refuses to consider it. Peterson has been there the entire way, after all, while Williams was beating the likes of Margarito and Sharmba Mitchell. And then there are the times they spend together away from boxing, working on maintenance at rental properties or just driving around Aiken. Williams' nickname, "The Punisher," was devised while he and Peterson were dining at a local Waffle House. That intimacy, he could not share with any other trainer.

"We have that loyalty and trust," Williams said. "He took a chance on me and I took a chance on him. There's a bond, you know what I'm saying? It's not about boxing all the time. It's about life. He wanted me to see what he's achieved, and what he's got, so I could exceed everything he has done. He's about his business and, with me being

Sharmba Mitchell goes down for the count in the fourth round of his August 2006 bout with Williams. Mitchell was pretty much finished by then, but Williams has such a tough time getting opponents, he frequently has to settle for matches he really doesn't want.

In an attempt to increase his options, welterweight Williams beefed up to middleweight in September 2008 and easily bowled over outclassed clubfighter Andy Kolle in the opening round.

around him that made me get on my business. I wanted to get property and have stuff of my own, so when I quit boxing, I don't have to worry about where I'm going to get my next paycheck. So I've already got that intact. I think I'm doing pretty good."

Both men dismiss the notion that a big-time trainer is always the panacea for improving a ready-made fighter.

Said Williams, "To me, a good trainer is a guy like Mr. Peterson, who took me from Day One, when I had no pro experience at all, and he raised me and taught me the boxing game, to become 35-1 and a two-time world champion. That's a great trainer to me."

Said Peterson, "How many of these big-time trainers took guys from the incubator and turned them into champions? How many of those guys have started a fighter from Day One and made a champion out of him? Oh, boy, you start Xing those guys out, and there aren't too many big-time trainers out there."

Williams lives in North Augusta, South Carolina, just across the Savannah River from Augusta, Georgia, but his heart lives in nearby Aiken, a city of 29,000 where his favorite activities—other than hanging out with his children, five-year-old Paul Jr. and three-year-old Jecoria, who live with his mother—are stopping at the firing range to shoot one of his half-dozen weapons, including a Glock .40 handgun and an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle, then consuming 20 chicken wings at Wing-Stop.

Williams never got Floyd Mayweather into the ring, but, as if to illustrate the absurdity of his matchmaking difficulties, one fellow Aiken native did: Paul "Big Show" Wight, Mayweather's opponent at WrestleMania XXIV.

Dan Goossen said the lengths taken by his rival promoters to avoid Williams are something he never has experienced, and then ticked off the list of potential opponents he said he has pursued, unsuccessfully, since Williams-Quintana II. It includes Margarito, Pavlik, Zab Judah, Shane Mosley, Carlos Baldomir, Joshua Clottey, Luis Collazo, Sergio Mora, and Michael Jennings.

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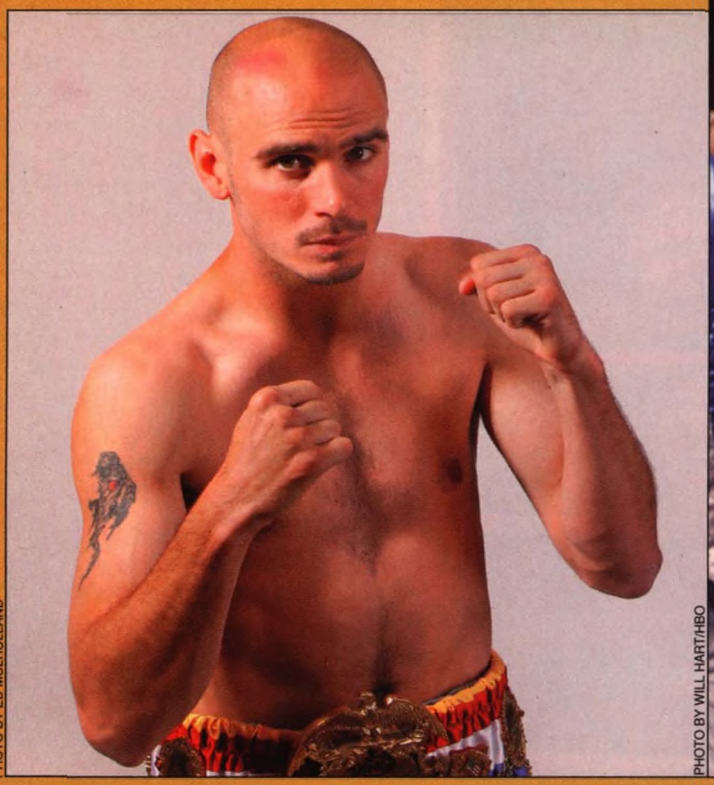

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

According to promoter Dan Goossen, Kelly Pavlik (above), Shane Mosley (above right) and Luis Collazo (bottom right) are among the fighters he has tried to match with Williams without success. "I've never seen anyone, in my entire promotional career, as avoided as Paul Williams," claimed Goossen.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

"I've never seen Bob Arum and Don King, in all my years I've been going toe-to-toe with them in the promotional business, avoid someone like this," Goossen said. "I called Richard Schaefer about Shane Mosley, before Mosley beat Ricardo Mayorga, and Richard said, 'I'll get back to you.' I haven't gotten that call yet. And what makes it hilarious are the responses I get. It's always, 'Are you crazy?' or, 'Are you serious?' or, 'Do you think I'm nuts?' It never gets to money."

Goossen publicly offered $4-million or 50 percent of the revenue, whichever Margarito preferred, to make Williams-Margarito II. When that didn't fly, Goossen said Arum never offered more than his initial tender of $1.5-million to Williams for a fight against Pavlik. Williams' team learned negotiations had collapsed, by reading on the Internet that Pavlik-Hopkins had been finalized.

Goossen rails against perceptions that Margarito is the best welterweight in the world: "It drives me nuts that there are certain reporters, certain announcers, who are sitting there with tunnel vision," while most marketable opponents shy away from facing a welterweight with an 82-inch reach, one inch longer than Wladimir Klitschko's.

"I've never seen anyone, in my entire promotional career, as avoided as Paul Williams," Goossen said. "It will change. We'll do it by opening up the pool of fighters. If Paul stays at 147, that limits us to the same pool of fighters. But if he's fighting at 147, 154, 160, and even 168, simultaneously, we'll have a bigger pool of fighters to choose from. The money is there. It's just going to take using a pool of opponents from all four weight divisions."

Williams may be the man without a weight division, fighting primarily in a class where he already defeated the dominant force, but if welterweight supremacy eludes him, he'll just keep looking by the side of the road. You never know when you might get lucky. ■

David Mayo covers boxing for the Grand Rapids (Michigan) Press and is a regular contributor to THE RING.

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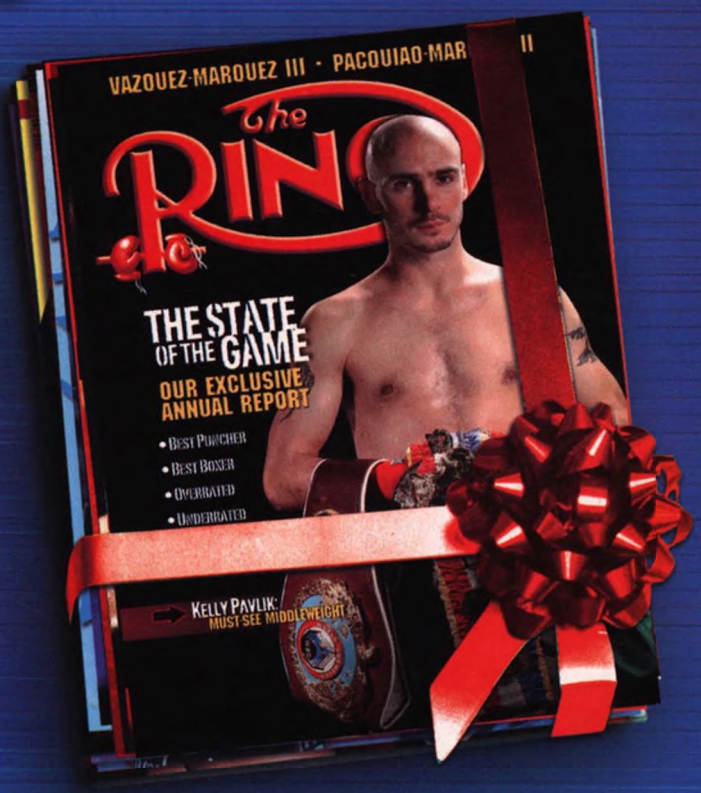

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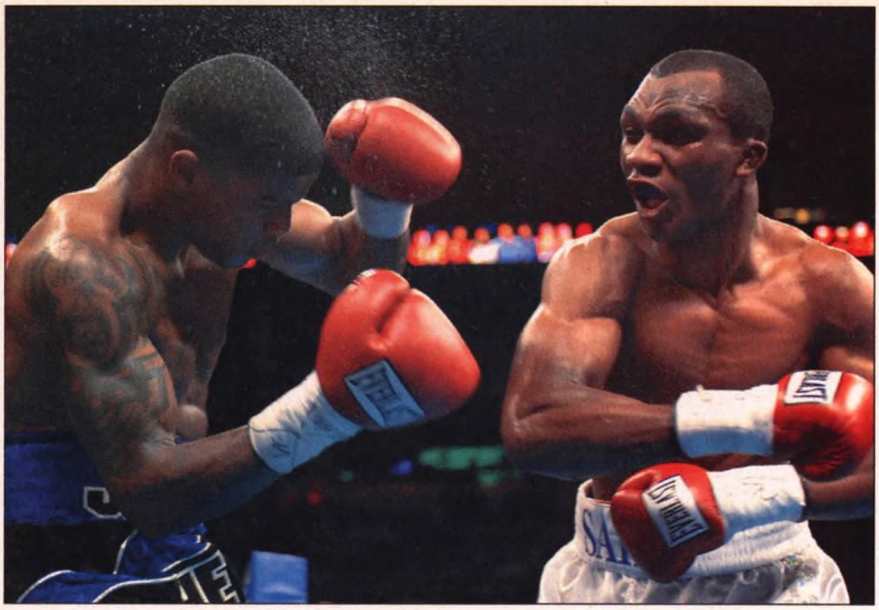
THE CONTENDER ON THE MOVE

New Network, New Host, New Country

By Don Stradley
PHOTOS BY LAWRENCE RIPSHER

When last we saw boxing's reality series *The Contender*, Sakio Bika and Jaidon Codrington were knocking the hell out of each other at the TD Banknorth Garden in Boston for the Season Three finale. Bika won a thriller, *The Contender* producers were ecstatic, and the show's future looked secure. As host Sugar Ray Leonard, co-executive producer Jeff Wald, and a handful of ESPN representatives left the Garden, they all but slapped each other on the back and said, "See ya next season." They were like high school girls writing "Best Friends Forever" in each other's yearbooks.



Super middleweight Sakio Bika (right) punches his way to an eighth-round TKO over Jaidon Codrington in the finale Season Three. The sensational slugfest was by far the best fight of the first three seasons, and set the bar high for this year's contestants.

Alas, the reality of reality TV struck like a rabbit punch; citing poor ratings, ESPN did not renew *The Contender*. Instead, beginning in December, *The Contender* Season Four will be aired on Versus. This will include the two-hour live finale on February 19, 2009. Another change is that Leonard, he of the manicured fingernails and Hall of Fame credentials, has been replaced as host by television actor (and former boxer) Tony Danza.

Of course, the framework of the show remains the same, with relatively unknown fighters gathered together in hopes of earning more money than they've ever seen and coming out of the show more famous than when they went in. *The Contender*, still produced under the auspices of reality TV powerhouse Mark Burnett Productions and DreamWorks Television, was certainly a career boost for Season One winner Sergio Mora, and served as a golden ticket for other *Contender* alumni such as Peter Manfredo, Steve Forbes, and Alfonso Gomez.

As in previous seasons, the pugs will share living quarters and train together (this season's trainers are John Bray and Tommy Brooks), with each episode highlighted by a scheduled five-round fight, after which the loser is booted from the tournament. The two fighters

Season Four Contenders

At A Glance

MIKE ALEXANDER, 34
Columbus, Ohio, 12-2 (8)
▷***Fast Fact***: Won his first six bouts by first-round knockout.

FELIX CORA JR., 28
Galveston, Texas, 18-2-2 (9)
▷***Fast Fact***: Scored a points win over fellow cast member Darnell Wilson two years ago.

RYAN COYNE, 26
St. Louis, Missouri, 9-0 (3) with 1 no-decision
▷***Fast Fact***: His first professional bout ended in a no-decision.

EHINOMEN EHIKHAMENOR, 28
Queens, New York, 12-3-0 (7)
▷***Fast Fact***: Five of his 15 career bouts have been at the Mohegan Sun Casino in Connecticut.

DEON ELAM, 28
Van Nuys, California, 9-0-0 (5)
▷***Fast Fact***: Made his pro debut against an opponent who outweighed him by 23 pounds.

ALFREDO ESCALERA JR., 28
San Juan, Puerto Rico, 15-1-1 (11)
▷***Fast Fact***: Is the son of former WBC junior lightweight titleholder Alfredo Escalera Sr.

TIM FLAMOS, 41
Brockton, Massachusetts, 20-4-1(8)
▷***Fast Fact***: This season's oldest competitor took up boxing after reading a book about Rocky Marciano.

RICHARD GINGRAS, 27
Claremont, New Hampshire, 9-1-0 (5)
▷***Fast Fact***: Did not start boxing until college.

JOELL GODFREY, 27
East St. Louis, Illinois, 9-0-1 (5)
▷***Fast Fact***: His inspirations are Evander Holyfield, Roy Jones, and Muhammad Ali.

who proceed to the finale will compete for the grand prize, at a location not yet determined. Last year, Bika won $750,000.

Along with the new network and host, the show's filming has been relocated from Los Angeles to Singapore. *The Contender*'s producers insist the new location had nothing to do with Mark Burnett Productions establishing an Asia office in Singapore in October 2007.

"It was time to make the show international," Executive Producer Page Feldman told THE RING. "There was no real reason to continue producing the show in America. We've chosen fighters from all around the world, so an international setting made sense. Singapore is great, and it's been an easy shoot. Ray said he was jealous he couldn't be in Singapore, because it's such a beautiful place."

The new season has created plenty of excitement, but part of the enthusiasm comes from *The Contender* being on the air at all.

"We're the show that refused to die," said Wald. "We're like an old fighter that keeps getting off the mat to fight on."

But as *The Contender* gets off the mat for a new season, there are some things to consider. For instance ...

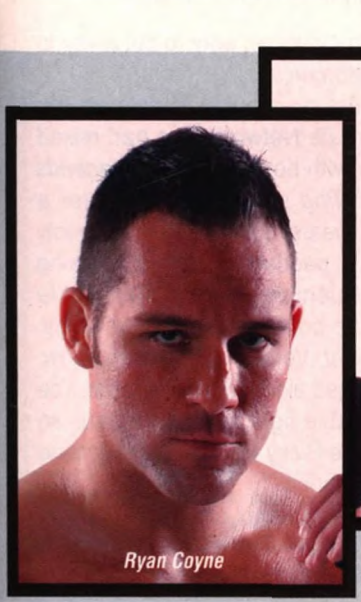
Tony Danza is not Sugar Ray (Leonard, Robinson, or Seales): Leonard will be missed. His presence gave the rough boxing environment a shot of glamour, and at the postfight press conference in Boston last winter, many of *The Contender* fighters gushed about having Leonard on the scene. Because of scheduling conflicts, he's passed the torch to Danza.

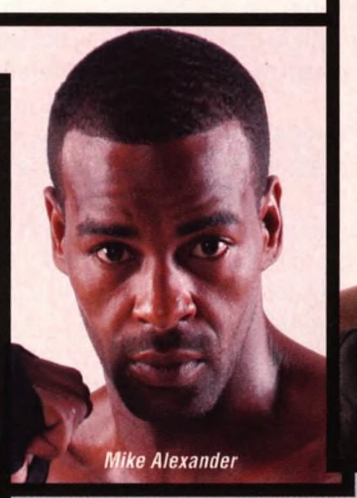
"I couldn't be more excited to be hosting *The Contender* this season," Danza said when Season Four was announced. "Not only is it one of the best shows on television, but one of the wildest shows ever dreamed up."

Although his name probably raised a few eyebrows, Danza, 9-3 (9), is a fine choice for the hosting role. He loves boxing, he can be funny the way ex-fighters from Brooklyn can be funny, and having been bounced off the canvas a few times during his days as a middleweight, he knows what the guys are going through.

"Ray calls Tony every day to ask how it's going," said Feldman. "We all loved Ray, but the fighters love Tony too. He's been in the ring; he knows what it's like to win or to face defeat. Ray knows Tony very well and has given his blessing. In fact, they got together beforehand to discuss the possibility of Tony stepping in."

The exotic setting of Singapore combined with appearing on *The Contender* has moved Danza and the fighters to describe the Season Four experience as, "Dreams on parade," an elegant expression that ought to serve as the show's new catch phrase. After all, *The Contender* has always been


Ryan Coyne


Mike Alexander

Troy Ross

Lawrence Tauasa

RICO HOYE, 33
Detroit, Michigan, 20-2 (15)
▷*Fast Fact*: His heaviest weight for a fight was 181 pounds; he's never fought at cruiserweight.

AKINYEMI LALEYE, 27
Las Vegas, 10-1 (5)
▷*Fast Fact*: Decided to try boxing after meeting Winky Wright at a Florida shopping mall.

TROY ROSS, 33
Toronto, Canada, 17-1 (12)
▷*Fast Fact*: Was a two-time Canadian Olympian.

JON SCHNEIDER
29, Yonkers, New York, 7-2-1 (5)
▷*Fast Fact*: Served four years in the Unites States Marine Corps.

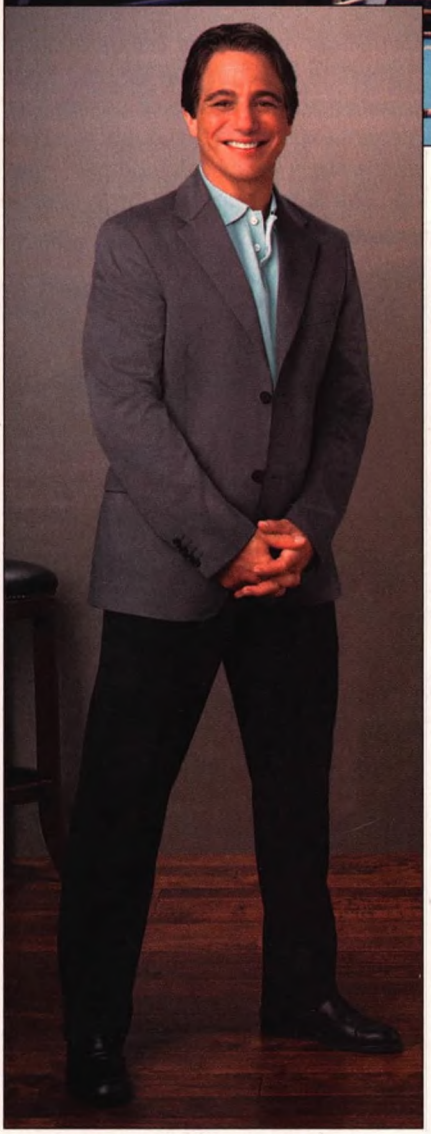
LAWRENCE TAUASA, 29
Sydney, Australia, 30-5-1 (17)
▷*Fast Fact*: Has been boxing since he was eight years old.

ERICK VEGA, 29
Phoenix, Arizona, 8-2-1 (6)
▷*Fast Fact*: His mother would not allow him to box when he was young.

DARNELL WILSON, 33
Tacoma Park, Maryland, 23-7-3 (20)
▷*Fast Fact*: Has been nicknamed "The Ding-A-Ling-Man" since high school.

—D.S.

It matters little whether it's in Los Angeles or Singapore, the location of the fourth season of **The Contender**, *a boxing ring is still a boxing ring. It's what takes place between the ropes that counts, especially for the 16 fighters seeking fame and fortune via the popular reality TV program.*



Former pro-boxer-turned-actor Tony Danza has replaced Sugar Ray Leonard as the host of **The Contender**, *which has moved from ESPN to Versus.*

about dreams—the dreams of fighters trying to break through to the big time, and the American dream of success for the little guy.

Danza knows a lot about dreams coming true. He may not be an ex-champion, but he has gone from being kayoed at the Sunnyside Gardens to starring on television, to tap-dancing on Broadway. He's daring, too, once taking a role in a New York production of *The Iceman Cometh* opposite Oscar winner Kevin Spacey. Anyone who can handle the words of Eugene O'Neill can handle hosting duties on *The Contender*.

Viewers will warm up to Danza. But they'll have to find him first, because ...

Versus is not ESPN: Whether you love ESPN for giving us 'round the clock sports coverage, or hate it for inspiring a generation of smarmy sports broadcasters, the network gave *The Contender* some much needed cachet after the show had been dumped by NBC. Versus, on the other hand, reaches considerably fewer homes than ESPN, and has a reputation for technical blunders, the most infamous occurring during the 2006-07 NHL playoffs when a game went into overtime, only to cut away to a paid infomercial.

Versus, previously known as the Outdoor Life Network, has had mixed success with boxing. Versus' *Legends Of The Ring* series has aired for a couple of years, but the shows are badly produced, padded out with dull talking head sequences that turn memorable 40-minute bouts into two-hour slogs. *Fight Night*, Versus' live boxing show, has chugged along under the radar. The most notable fight to air on Versus so far was the Ricky Hatton-Juan Lazcano bout last spring.

After a season on NBC and two on ESPN, can *The Contender* thrive on Versus?

"Versus has shown that they intend to be a factor in the boxing business, and we are looking forward to a long and successful relationship," Wald said.

"We are thrilled to be on Versus," said Feldman. Then, in what could've been a comment aimed at ESPN, Feldman added, "[Versus] wanted this show, and it helps when the parent company is enthusiastic and supportive."

Still, the name of the game will be ratings. Right now, *The Contender*

Some of the contestants, such as Darnell Wilson, will be very familiar to boxing fans. The hard-hitting "The Ding-A-Ling-Man" has fought frequently on TV and challenged for the WBA cruiser strap in May 2008, losing a decision to Firat Arslan in Germany.

people are upbeat, but if Season Four doesn't draw, it could end up as streaming video on the Versus website alongside bicycle races from Spain.

It would have been unfortunate if *The Contender* couldn't find a network, especially after the way Season Three culminated with one of the best fights of 2007. Last year, ESPN aired *The Contender*'s fights in their entirety, and then aired them as a series separate from the regular episodes. Versus has a plan to do the same. However ...

Cruiserweights are not middleweights: Cruiserweights look big and powerful, and at 200 pounds they are basically the size of heavyweights from two generations ago. But will fans who don't always watch boxing, but were introduced to the sport by *The Contender*, find the cruiserweights too slow and ponderous?

With the exception of Evander Holyfield's reign as champion, the cruiserweight class has never been a popular division. Since its earliest

Rico Hoye has been a pro since 2001 and already had a crack at the IBF light heavyweight belt, when he challenged then-titleholder Clinton Woods in March 2004 in England. Hoye was stopped in the fifth round.

days in the 1980s, it's been a Le Brea tar pit for small heavyweights or old middleweights. Light heavyweights don't even bother with it; they usually skip right over it to the heavyweight money. You could preserve the best fights in the division's history on a single DVD, and still have room on the disc for a season of *Taxi*.

With the show's future more precarious than ever, what prompted Wald and company to choose this season's fighters from boxing's cul de sac division?

According to Feldman, "It was our plan to gradually focus on bigger fighters, but we doubted there would be 16 heavyweights available. When the cruiserweights were mentioned, I have to admit, I'd never even heard of cruiserweights. I'm glad we're getting a chance to put these guys in the spotlight."

If *The Contender*'s cruiserweights can fight a bit, their bigger physiques may be impressive to viewers. Maybe they'll come off as gladiators, rocking each other with howitzer-like punches. Throw in some slow-mo footage and bombastic theme music, and suddenly these cruiserweights will look like *Jurassic Park* monsters tearing each other up. Co-producer Wald is already trumpeting this cast of cruiserweights as the "best group of fighters we have had."

"We've just finished taping the fifth fight and the reports I have been getting back from Singapore are that these are the best fights we've had," Wald told ESPN.com in September. "With five-round fights in a 17-foot ring, these guys don't dance and hold. Mainly, they are toe-to-toe with nowhere to run. One fight in particular, I had three different people down there call me and tell me it was as exciting as Sakio Bika-Jaidon Codrington."

If the big guys really are blasting away at each other in Singapore, that's something we should be excited about. But what about *The Contender*'s other aspect—the personal stories and melodramas that crop up during shooting? When the smaller fighters of seasons past wept after a loss or discussed the difficulties of their personal lives, they reminded us of how small we all are in the face of family struggles, financial problems, and unfair judges. We empathized. But will a 200-pound bruiser ever appear as vulnerable as those smaller fighters who always appear half-starved? One never knows with the public. Maybe viewers will appreciate the cruiserweights as gentle giants. Advanced word is that this group is a colorful lot.

"I think this is our best season yet personality-wise," Wald said. "I think the viewers are really going to be taken with these guys. There are some guys this season who have phenomenal stories. Because this is our fourth season, the guys have been watching the show since the beginning and they have a sense of what it can do for their careers, which makes them even hungrier."

The Contender Season Four will feature the usual mixed bag of veterans and newcomers, with two of the fighters,

Texan Felix Cora went undefeated in his first 20 pro bouts, but was twice knocked out in his final two bouts before joining* The Contender *in hopes of reviving his career.

Darnell Wilson and Rico Hoye, having previously challenged for alphabet titles. And Wald is right about the stories. Among the 16 fighters we'll meet is a fellow whose son was once confined to a wheelchair and has recently started walking again, a fighter who journeyed to America from Nigeria to pursue the sport he loved, an ex-Navy man who served two tours in Iraq, and a fighter who works during the day as a home care nurse, rehabilitating the disabled and elderly.

In a way, this season's cast is presenting more than their stories to the public; they are also presenting the long ignored cruiserweight class. If the action lives up to the advance billing, the show may help an entire weight division see its dreams on parade. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

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MOSLEY IN HIS TWILIGHT ZONE

Does He Really Need To Fight Margarito On The Way Out?

It took a lot of right hands like this one before Mayorga caved in the final round of his September bout with Mosley on HBO. Part of that was due to the fact that Mayorga entered the ring at 170 pounds, but there's little doubt that Sugar Shane is currently in the twilight of his career.

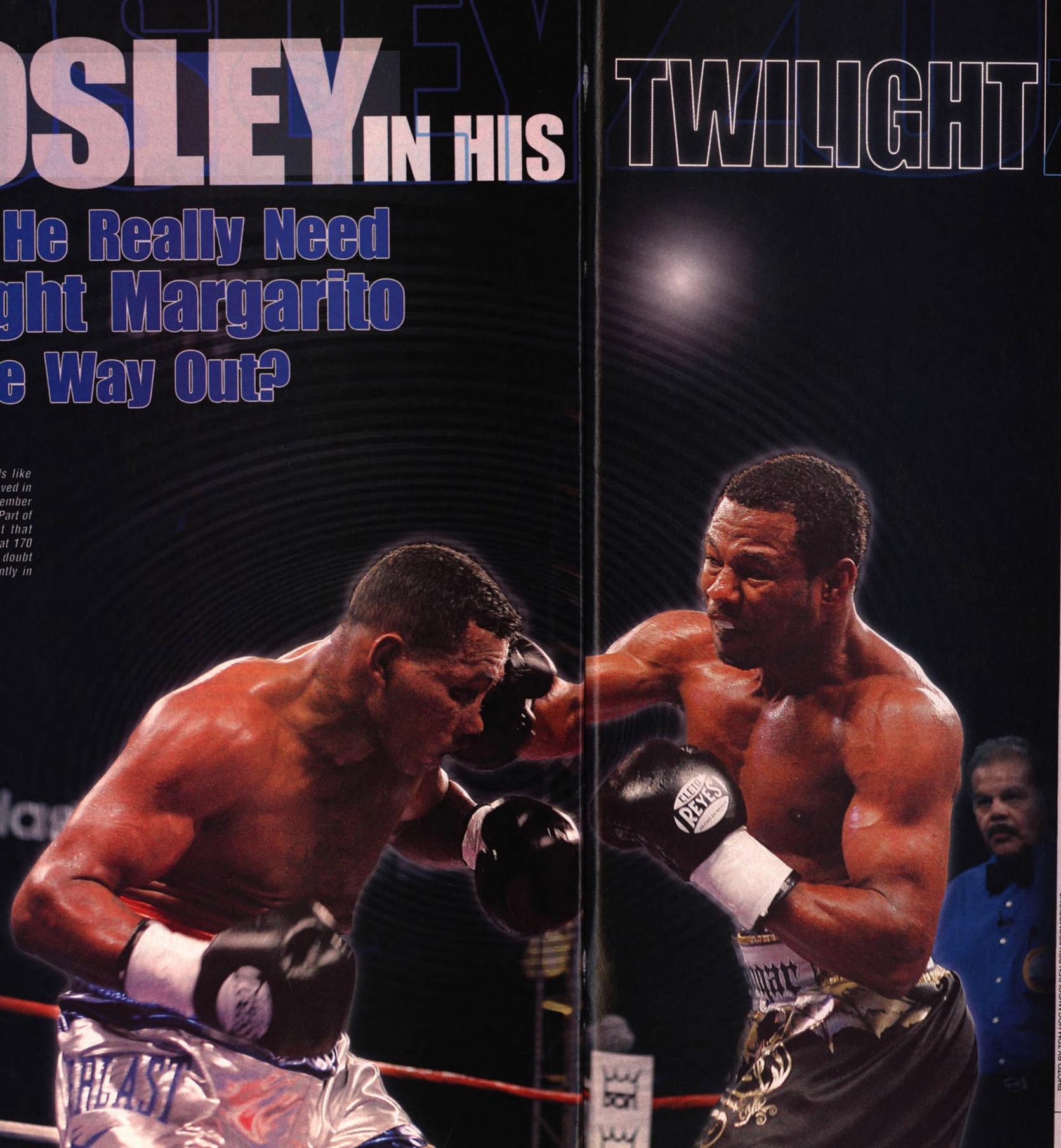


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

By Ivan Goldman

After all the celebration and excitement that followed Shane Mosley's crowd-pleasing victory over the nasty, determined Ricardo Mayorga, a cloudy mass of cold, gray fact quickly moved across the weather map of his career. Sugar Shane turned 37 a couple of weeks before the bout. The odds disfavor Mosley having more than three or four good fights in him, if that many. And formidable though he was against the Nicaraguan terror—scoring a spectacular 12th-round kayo—he's not the fighter he once was. At this stage of his career, he won't be getting any better. Whether he likes it or not, Shane Mosley must now map out his end game.

In this business, where one split-second shot can upset months of planning and training, Mosley can't control his future. But he can at least try because if he can't choose the moment of departure, the moment will choose him.

Huddled with his inner circle, he now weighs a multitude of factors. How fervent is his desire? What are his finances? And speaking of money, which fights would bring him the fattest purses? How's his health and conditioning? Who'd be willing to take him on? Which opponents would help him draw a crowd? Which ones could firm up his legacy? Which ones could conceivably tear it down?

A fighter's career is like the average person's life, only speeded up. Most of us hope to at least hit the median on those actuarial tables and survive in good repair into our 70s and possibly beyond. But in fight years, Shane's well into his 80s already. And like the average Joe, there are certain roads he can no longer take. At a certain point in time, it's too late to apply for astronaut school.

Likewise, it's no longer possible for Mosley to retire undefeated, like Rocky Marciano.

But he's too smart and too rich to go out like the mythical Mountain Rivera in Rod Serling's *Requiem For A Heavyweight*, wearing a cape into a wrestling ring so he can scrape together another month's rent.

By most people's measurements, Mosley is financially set. He and his wife, Jin, own a spectacular home in La Verne, California, and it's paid for. Jin, who's also his manager, says she's more worried about her husband's health than adding numbers to their net worth. Incorporating that kind of thinking into the process, Shane would have to consider bowing out right now. His final, crushing left hook to Mayorga's head would end his career with a lasting exclamation point.

But forget it. Sugar Shane loves to train, loves to fight, is still one of the best welterweights in the world, and as he made clear within minutes of taking out Mayorga, he's not ready to quit. Clever matchmaking and sound deal-making could land him some more top-notch contests.

Though popular, Mosley is not *wildly* popular. He's a boxing star, not a crossover mega-star. That was true even when he sat atop the pound-for-pound ratings. He made much of his money winning two fights apiece against Oscar De La Hoya and Fernando Vargas. Both had plenty of fans who knew the formidable Mosley would help their favorites put on a fine show. He's a rough test who's treated much the way Evander Holyfield was some years ago, when he was still one of the best heavyweights in the world but on the downward slope of his career.

Fans knew Holyfield came to fight, and when you put him in against a formidable opponent, he'd draw a crowd. Like Holyfield, Mosley dominated a lower weight

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Mayorga put up a determined effort, and was actually leading on one of the official scorecards when he was knocked out. Most of the Nicaraguan slugger's blows were crude, roundhouse swings, but this left to Mosley's head was a direct connect.

class (lightweight for Mosley, light heavyweight for Holyfield) and found the pickings not quite so easy when he moved up in weight.

Mosley and Mayorga drew an announced crowd of 5,798 fans to The Home Depot Center in Carson, California, down the freeway from Pomona, where Mosley grew up. He has to be very much aware that his business partner and sometime-nemesis De La Hoya, also a Southern California native, drew approximately 27,000 fans to the same site four months earlier. These comparisons with Oscar have gone on for decades, years before they turned pro. Mosley was a fine, world-class amateur. But it was Oscar who, at the 1992 Olympics, took home the gold and turned into a superstar.

Sixteen years later, Mosley-Mayorga was set in a tennis facility with a capacity of 8,000. De La Hoya-vs. Stevie Forbes (which, given the fighters' styles, didn't promise the same degree of excitement) had to be located in the soccer stadium next door in order to meet the much greater ticket demand.

Mosley shocked the boxing world when he took on Vernon Forrest rather than take the short end of the purse money for a third, far more lucrative

Beautiful Knockout Ends Ugly Fight

Delighted fans were already on their feet when Shane Mosley closed the show one second before its scheduled end, but they suffered through some dull moments to get there.

Mosley, for the most part, scored the cleaner shots, and Ricardo Mayorga was even wilder than usual, mixing fewer straight punches into his roundhouse repertoire. The contest was filled with fouls and the fighters' complaints about the fouls as they grappled and shoved each other around the ring, looking for advantage with headbutts, rabbit punches, and low blows. Mayorga, the guiltier party, was the bigger complainer.

The promoter ludicrously listed both men at 5'10", but Mosley would need lifts in his shoes to make 5'9". Known for brushes with the law and X-rated insults aimed at his opponents' wives and girlfriends, Mayorga isn't terribly popular even in his native Nicaragua, so only a few Mayorga fans were sprinkled around the stadium.

Mayorga, 28-7-1 (22), came out blasting at the bell with huge overhand rights, scoring mostly glancing blows. Mosley, 45-5 (38), was faster and sharper. By the second round, the pair had settled into a wild, sloppy fight, which is clearly the way Mayorga wanted it. In round three, as they got tangled, Mayorga raised his shoulder to lift Mosley off the ground. It was a tactic he would repeat. Referee David Mendoza had his hands full.

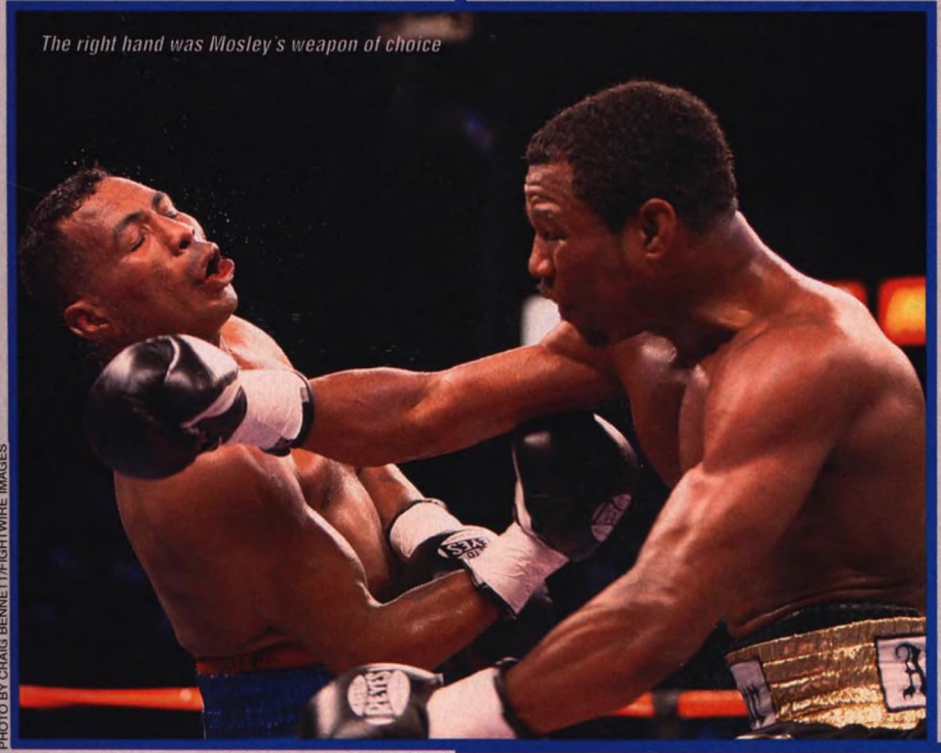
Mosley landed an excellent one-two in the fourth round, producing a look from Mayorga that said: *Is that all you got?* Eventually he would learn that, no, it wasn't.

A Mosley right-hand lead excited the crowd in round six, which was his best round up to that point. But during the next several rounds, the fight got even sloppier. Mayorga repeatedly charged in like a lineman, and Mosley didn't do enough to discourage him.

Finally, in round 12, an excellent right from Mosley hurt Mayorga. After the Nicaraguan was caught with more solid punches, he sank to the canvas to wild cheering. After taking the mandatory eight-count, Mayorga rose, and Mendoza signaled them to continue. Mosley walked up and, not bothering to keep his guard up, practically tore Mayorga's head off with a left hook. It resembled a hunter finishing off wounded prey. With Mayorga flat on his back, Mendoza skipped the count and called the contest over at the 2:59 mark.

Judges Nelson Vasquez and Tony Crebs had it for Mosley 105-104 and 107-102, respectively, through 11 rounds. Pat Russell saw it 105-104, Mayorga. THE RING had it 105-104, Mosley.

—I.G.



The right hand was Mosley's weapon of choice

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Mosley celebrates his 45th professional victory as referee Mendoza stops the fight with just one click left on the clock and Mayorga flat on his back. It provided a sensational finish to an otherwise untidy encounter.

fight with Oscar. It indicated that at least in his case, money wasn't everything. But now Mosley has to be considering that third fight again. Their promotional company, Golden Boy, says it won't happen, but so what. They've given fans two exciting matches, so why not another? It would be a huge event, pulling in plenty of cash for them and fattening their company kitty.

Another argument for a third contest is that Mosley has admitted to taking steroids before their sequel, detracting from the victory. He insists they were administered to him without his knowledge and, in an attempt to prove it, has even filed a lawsuit against his convicted steroid peddler.

After De La Hoya set up his December 6 match with Manny Pacquiao, everyone stopped nagging him to take on Antonio Margarito, Paul Williams, or Miguel Cotto, ranked one, two, and three, respectively, at welterweight by THE RING. But the matchmaking bar remains high for Mosley, who's forged a reputation as a man willing to take on anybody, which he proved again when he took on heavy-fisted Cotto and acquitted himself well in defeat.

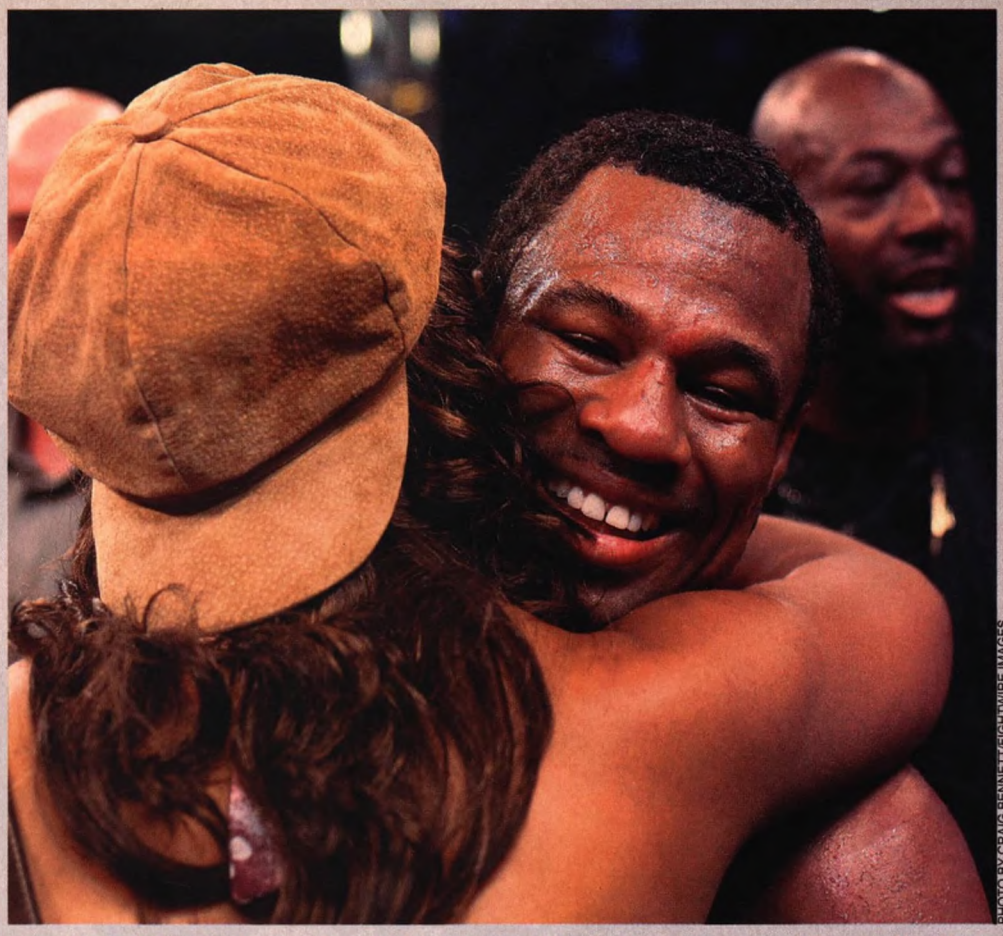
After he turned out the lights on Mayorga, Mosley, ranked number four at welter, said he wanted nothing but big fights. Another title would be nice, but title matches, he agreed, aren't always the biggest events. Margarito and Cotto, he said, appear to have plans that don't include him, narrowing his choices. But Margarito, by attending the Mayorga fight, seemed to imply Mosley might be in his future after all.

Golden Boy Promotions CEO Richard Schaefer and Top Rank Chairman Bob Arum certainly seem to think there's an excellent chance of Mosley-Margarito happening early-2009, probably a week before the Super Bowl.

"We just have to work out the numbers with HBO," Arum told David A. Avila of thesweetscienec.com.

Mosley, whose best weight now appears to be 147, fought Mayorga at junior middleweight. Officially, they both weighed in at 153½, but Mayorga, after re-hydrating, entered the ring at 170, which meant he essentially competed as a light heavyweight. Mosley came in 9½ pounds lighter, which made the win even more impressive.

Although a match with Margarito would be Mosley's most dangerous assignment, it would also be the most lucrative. For comparison's sake, let's look at the alternatives.



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A very happy-looking Mosley gets a congratulatory hug from his wife, Jin, after his kayo of Mayorga. Mrs. Mosley has expressed her desire for Shane to retire on numerous occasions.

A third match against Forrest would attract more interest if their sequel hadn't been so boring. Mosley complained afterward that Forrest came to win but not to fight.

Winky Wright, who, like Forrest, defeated Mosley in two back-to-back contests, appears to be a genuine middleweight these days. Winky, who will turn 37 November 26, hasn't competed since losing to Bernard Hopkins in July 2007. Barely eking out a reading on the excite-o-meter, Wright also hasn't scored a kayo in nearly seven years.

Use your imagination a little and you can find two opponents, besides Margarito, that would be nitro to Mosley's glycerin: Floyd Mayweather and Ricky Hatton. Mosley had "Pretty Boy" in his sights for years, but Floyd scored ever so many more millions by defeating first Oscar and then Hatton. Would Mayweather risk his undefeated record to return for a Mosley contest? It's questionable, especially when you consider that a lucrative contract to fight Oscar again was just waiting for his signature when he retired. But the fight world is fluid. Fortunes change, and with them attitudes.

It's debatable whether Ricky "Fatton" (Ricky's own term) can continue getting down to 140 pounds. If he tries competing at 147 again, he'd have to give Mosley prime consideration. It would be a big show in Manchester or Las Vegas and could do solid pay-per-view numbers.

Williams, Joshua Clottey, Zab Judah, and Andre Berto would likely be second-tier choices—opponents Team Mosley would contact if nothing else materializes, though any one of those matches could conceivably be excellent, even great. Fans had high hopes for Mosley-Mayorga, but by the middle rounds it devolved into too much clinching and too many missed opportunities.

"He was buying time," Mosley said. The clinching, he added, is "part of boxing." Mosley denied being sluggish himself. "I was looking out for his overhand right," he said by way of explanation for what looked like a rather subdued effort on his part. If Mosley hadn't come on in the final round, a chorus of analysts would be asking him why he's still pursuing a career at all.

But thanks to his talent, determination, and willingness to gamble, Mosley's dreams of a few more big fights are plausible. As he tries to fashion his end game, much will depend on who's available and who's willing to get in there and gamble with him. And although nothing had been signed as we went to press, it's looking more and more like Margarito will be in the opposite corner the next time Mosley ducks between the ropes. ■

Ivan Goldman, The Ring's West Coast correspondent, was ringside in Carson, California, for Mosley-Mayorga.

CHAD DAWSON

THE NEXT BIG THING?

All He Needs Is A Kayo Punch And Some Pizzazz

By Don Stradley

PHOTOS BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

One wonders whom Floyd Mayweather has on speed dial. His jeweler, perhaps. A local furrier. Vince McMahon or Dr. Phil, perhaps? But the number he dialed from the cheap seats of the Palms Casino Resort in Las Vegas is the one that set the boxing world talking. For it was from there that he dialed up Chad Dawson prior to his October 11 bout with Antonio Tarver. Apparently, Mayweather gave Dawson the pep talk to end all pep talks. Mayweather's phone call made more news than the fight itself.

Referee Jay Nady raised Dawson's arm in victory (opposite page) following "Bad Chad's" comprehensive 12-round decision over Tarver (above). It was a significant victory that elevated Dawson to the number-two contender spot in The Ring's light heavyweight ratings.

Like all well-schooled fighters, Dawson went to the body when his opponent covered up. But despite landing plenty of quick-fisted combinations to both the head and body, Dawson never really had Tarver in serious trouble.

To take things a step further, Mayweather later looked directly in the Showtime cameras and declared Dawson was now the top pound-for-pound fighter in boxing.

Unfortunately, as well intentioned as it may have been, Mayweather's praise seemed as gaudy as the chinchilla trunks he used to favor. Let's hope Mayweather's comments don't come back to haunt Dawson. Not only are handpicked successors usually doomed to fail, but Mayweather's words sound like the perfect lead-in to a poignant "Whatever Happened To?" story five years from now.

Besides, Dawson didn't really need an endorsement; a fairly large segment of fandom already views Dawson as the next big thing. Let's not anoint him just yet, though. Dawson may be the future of the division, but he's not yet the division's star.

Dawson's handling of Tarver was a bit of a surprise. Dawson's previous bout saw him wobbled and nearly outworked by veteran Glen Johnson, but Dawson made sure Tarver wouldn't get a chance to do the same.

"I was never hurt, but he was a busier fighter than I was tonight," the 39-year-old Tarver said with a shrug. "I missed a few times with my powershot, but that's what this is, it's a game of inches."

It's also a game of years, and Tarver may have racked up too many of those. But while Tarver contemplates his future, we will consider Dawson, and his place on the light heavyweight landscape.

The weeks leading up to the bout bristled with trash talk, mostly from Tarver, and Dawson insisted the bad blood was legit. Unfortunately, this didn't lead to any real blood. Instead, Dawson fought a disciplined, methodical fight, consisting of busy combinations, and just enough movement to keep Tarver from landing the left hand that once knocked Roy Jones gaga.

"The strategy was to keep turning him and make him use his old legs," Dawson's trainer, Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, said. "He used the plan to perfection."

Dawson's work was good enough to sweep the scorecards of judges Max Deluca, Dave Moretti, and C. J. Ross by scores of 118-109, 117-110, and 117-110, respectively. THE RING's scorecard mirrored those of Moretti and Ross.

Yet, Dawson's performance was not particularly thrilling. He had a plan, he stuck to it, and he won. End of story. Throughout the bout, Dawson was all tenor, no bass. Again, it's the star thing.

We know we're in murky waters when we criticize a fighter over something as subjective as star quality, but think of the light heavyweight division as a Hollywood set. The old guard at

PHOTO BY RAY KASPROWICZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

At times, Dawson inexplicably stopped moving, hid behind his gloves, and allowed Tarver to fire away. Although Dawson blocked a lot of these punches, his offensive lapses contributed to the less-than-scintillating nature of his performance.

the top are like the veteran performers who know how to work the room. Think of Tom Cruise early in his career. He often co-starred with old hands like Paul Newman, Dustin Hoffman, Jack Nicholson, and Robert Duvall. And, more often than not, the older guys stole the show (and even won Oscars). That's what stars do. But those gray beards also helped introduce Cruise to some of their audience, and by osmosis he absorbed some of their star quality. Stand next to greatness, it may rub off.

Boxing is all about star quality. It allows Hopkins and Jones to be headliners long after they've passed their primes. It allows Joe Calzaghe to fill stadiums in the U.K. It's hard to imagine Dawson ever creating such interest.

Dawson's lack of charisma became more apparent during the postfight interview with Showtime's Jim Grey. He remained deadpan, staring at his feet while he spoke. We don't expect him to turn into Ricardo Mayorga, but a little personality goes a long way in boxing. Mayorga spends more time on the canvas than an advertisement for Tecate, but because of his mouth he's made millions. Okay, maybe Dawson wants to be one of those "I-let-my-fists-do-the-talking" types. Fine, but those fists need to be louder. Tarver, unmarked after 12 rounds with the heir apparent, didn't even look like he'd been in a fight.

Of course, Dawson would be within his rights to say, I won the fight easily, and my critics can go fry eggs. But it wasn't just his persona that failed to impress us. It was also the way he won.

How do we knock a guy who wins nearly every round of a fight? Well, sticking so rigidly to a game plan becomes less impressive when your opponent is over the hill and seems unable to land anything substantial. Dawson also stopped fighting at times, standing in one spot with his gloves up like safety goggles. Stars do not take rounds off, not when you're more then a decade younger than the other guy, and not when you've been yapping about a fight for 16 months.

Many in the press, however, have an almost protective feeling about Dawson, calling him a "work in progress." *ShoBox* analyst Steve Farhood told THE RING, "His biggest assets are what have almost always been missing in this division—speed and youth. I'm big on Dawson, always have been." Thomas Hauser of secondsout.com was a little more reserved, telling us, "Dawson is a good fighter; not an exciting one. And his chin is suspect. Would I like to see him again? Sure. But only against A-list fighters. That will tell us how good he is."

It's also the only way he'll make any money. Dawson knows it too.

"Bring on the Kelly Pavliks, the Bernard Hopkins, the Joe Calzaghes, and the Roy Joneses," Dawson said after the bout. "Bring on whoever. I will move on from what I accomplished tonight—my new goal is to be at the top of the pound-for-pound list." Then, sounding nearly as silly as Mayweather, Dawson added, "Hopefully, I'll achieve that goal within a year."

Dawson's promoter Gary Shaw concurred. "If 'Bad' Chad wants to do it, we'll do it," said Shaw. "Whoever it is, I know that I represent the best 175-pounder in the world. If the winner of Calzaghe-Jones wants to fight, that fight is made. If Arum wants to put up the winner of Pavlik-Hopkins, that fight's made too. At 175 pounds, step right on up."

One could make a case for Dawson beating all of those opponents. One could also make a case that none of those bouts will happen, since Calzaghe, Jones, and Hopkins are hedging toward retirement, and should Jones beat Calzaghe, expect a Hopkins-Jones rematch before Dawson gets an invite to the party.

Dawson had better hope a few of those gentlemen extend their careers long enough to fight him, because without the rub from those more established stars, he'll spend the next leg of his career fighting Zsolt Erdei and Sakio Bika. Maybe Jermain Taylor. That's not exactly the red carpet treatment. A rematch with Johnson might be in order—Johnson deserves one—but it isn't likely to yield a different result. Dawson will squeak by again, Johnson will complain again, and Dawson will be no closer to leading the pack at 175.

Still, if he remains undefeated for a while, Dawson could acquire a different type of stardom. Some fighters—Larry Holmes, Marvelous Marvin Hagler, and Hopkins, to name three—were not stars right out of the gate. Neither was Calzaghe. Some fighters win acclaim gradually. We don't expect Dawson to fight Robert Allen three times, but if he puts together a string of good performances, and eventually earns recognition as THE RING's champion at 175, he'll become a star by attrition. It's a longer road to the top, but Mustafa Muhammad thinks Dawson can do it.

"This is the kind of a kid that trainers dream about all of their lives sometimes and never get," Mustafa Muhammad said after the bout. "He's a great person, he's a great, hard worker, he'll do anything you tell him, he has terrific instincts, and he has a fighter's heart. Now that he has a taste of what life is like up here at the top, you watch, he is going to be real, real solid, real hard to knock out of there. Get used to him."

Even so, Mustafa Muhammad's main mission during the fight was to remind Dawson to stay focused. This was especially true prior to the final round, as if there were lingering concerns regarding Dawson's chin, which was dangerously available against Johnson last April. So Dawson didn't press the issue during the final frame. He was helped by Tarver losing his balance and touching the canvas with his glove, earning Dawson a dubious knockdown. Tarver's awkward fall caused many beat writers to comment on Dawson's strong finish, which was nonsense; the knockdown was more of a slip, and Tarver actually took the fight to Dawson in the 12th.

"Tarver fought a great fight and he had a little bit more than I thought he would, but I caught a lot of punches with my gloves," Dawson said. "I was playing him. I worked him. Our

Dawson's trainer, former WBA light heavyweight titleholder Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, makes a point between rounds of the Tarver fight. Mustafa Muhammad said the hard-working Dawson is "the kind of a kid that trainers dream about all of their lives."

Tarver tumbles to the floor for a flash, off-balance knockdown in the 12th round. To many, it was the icing on the cake for Dawson, but other than the knockdown, Tarver dominated the final round, taking the fight to the younger man and scoring well.

philosophy is one round at a time and that's what we did."

Tarver also blocked a lot of Dawson's punches. In fact, many of Dawson's combinations hit nothing but Tarver's gloves and forearms. Still, many of the next day's headlines were absolutely glowing with praise for Dawson. Maybe people are easily impressed with quick hands. Or maybe, and this is more likely, people have simply grown impatient with the light heavyweight division. Remember, it's been four years since Tarver upset Jones, and two years since Hopkins upset Tarver. It's understandable that a new face will create excitement. Some may have hoped specifically for Tarver's comeuppance.

Tarver, 27-6 (19), is a decent guy, but his inconsistent performances and his increasingly sour nature have kept the press and the paying customers at a distance. But shed no tears for him—even though he never dominated the division, he'll always be known as the man who dominated Jones. There's a fair chance he'll take that all the way to Canastota.

Dawson, 27-0 (17), is certainly in the right place at the right time—he's a young man in a division full of famous old soldiers. He was also shrewd enough to relinquish the WBC belt to fight Tarver, rather than face lesser-known mandatory challenger Adrian Diaconu. That shows he's less interested in pleasing alphabet groups than he is in advancing his career, although from Tarver he picked up some more alphabet hardware.

As for those Dawson supporters who believe he's still a rough gem that will improve significantly, we disagree. We think this is as good as he gets: quick hands, a shaky jaw, and a trainer who tells him to *puh-leaze* be careful. That may be enough to keep him in the mix, but whether it's enough to make him the focal point of the division is another story.

If you're still not sure who the real star of the division is, just imagine Dawson was in a room with some of the other fighters mentioned in this story, and you can only have your picture taken with one of them. Whom would you choose?

Exactly. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

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Ranking The Best Fighters In The World

By Eric Raskin

This is the 13th year of THE RING 100, and this time, something's missing. It's something that's never been missing before, not by a long shot: the previous year's number-one fighter.

The retirement of Floyd Mayweather, following three consecutive years that saw "Money's" name atop these annual rankings, has drastically altered the complexion of the pound-for-pound list. It's given us a new number one, naturally, but it's had a trickle-down effect also. The fighter who would be number 11 if Mayweather was still active is now in the top 10; the fighter who would be number 21 is now in the top 20, and so forth down to the fighter who would be number 101 and left out of THE RING 100 and is instead included in this collection of the best boxers in the world.

Mayweather, however, is not the only pound-for-pound mainstay missing this year. Winky Wright, who was rated six last year, and Marco Antonio Barrera, who checked in at number 11 in '07, are gone as well. Neither man has fought in over a year, and though both claim to still be active boxers (Barrera retired but then un-retired a few months later), neither had a fight scheduled as of press time, so neither qualified for inclusion in THE RING 100. That means three fighters from last year's top 11 are nowhere to be found in the top 100. When it comes to a promise of change, Barack Obama has nothing on THE RING 100.

In fact, there are 26 new names in all. For the first time in a long time, there are two Klitschkos (and it wasn't so easy to decide whom to rank higher), and also for the first time in a long time, there are no Castillos (unrelated Martin and Jose Luis are both out). There are fighters who barely weigh 100 pounds and, for the first time in the history of these ratings, there's a fighter who weighs more than 300 pounds.

As always, there will be rankings that not every reader will agree with. That's because the pound-for-pound list is highly subjective, much more so than the divisional rankings. Those division-by-division ratings are based almost exclusively on merit, whereas the P-4-P ratings factor in a combination of achievement, perceived ability, and even perceived potential. It isn't easy to put the 100 best fighters in the world in order, but as of our press deadline of October 20, this was the order that THE RING determined to be most accurate.

Floyd Mayweather may have had the luxury of walking away from the game on his terms. When it comes to compiling THE RING 100, however, we are committed to toughing it out year after year.

1. MANNY **PACQUIAO**
WBC Lightweight Titleholder 47-3-2 (35)

Last Year's Ranking: 2
Status Report: Obviously, Floyd Mayweather's sudden retirement aided "Pac-Man's" ascension, but so did the Filipino icon's upgraded versatility. Far removed from the left-hand-happy puncher he used to be, Pacquiao now uses both hands to equal effect and can play cautious or aggressive depending on the situation. Used a mix of strategies to comfortably outpoint Marco Antonio Barrera and narrowly decision Juan Manuel Marquez, then blitzed overmatched David Diaz (KO 9) in lightweight debut.

Pacquiao flatten Diaz in spectacular fashion

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Future: December 6 fight with Oscar De La Hoya will push Pacquiao to the next level of stardom, win or lose. But a loss could conceivably knock him out of the P-4-P top spot.

2. JUAN MANUEL **MARQUEZ** World Lightweight Champion 49-4-1 (36)

Last Year's Ranking: 3
Status Report: With a one-round swing on one card, we might be talking about this long-underappreciated Mexican as the best fighter on the planet. In March, he fought Manny Pacquiao to a near standstill, but a key knockdown in round three made Pacquiao a split-decision winner. That loss was sandwiched by a pair of impressive wins, a dominant dissection of Rocky Juarez (W 12) and an explosive triumph over Joel Casamayor (KO 11) to claim the world lightweight championship.
Future: There's talk of a defense in '09 against Juan Diaz, but understandably, a third fight with Pacquiao remains Marquez' preference.

3. JOE **CALZAGHE** World Light Heavyweight Champion 45-0 (32)

Last Year's Ranking: 8
Status Report: Say what you want about how the Welshman spent his late-20s and early-30s; for the last couple of years he's been making his time in the prize ring count. Established total 168-pound supremacy last November by outsmarting and outfighting previously unbeaten Mikkel Kessler (W 12), then moved up to light heavyweight, took on RING champion Bernard Hopkins, and rose from a knockdown to prevail via split decision over the trickiest old man in the game.
Future: Fight with Roy Jones after our press deadline a great opportunity to add another legendary name to his resume. Win or lose, retirement isn't far off.

4. BERNARD **HOPKINS**
Light Heavyweight 49-5-1 (32) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 4
Status Report: With all due respect to George Foreman and Archie Moore, "The Executioner" has probably earned the right to call himself the greatest over-40 fighter ever. All he did in the past year was take on two undisputed champions, losing a decision to Joe Calzaghe that could have just as easily gone his way and then giving Kelly Pavlik a jaw-dropping 12-round boxing lesson. He's 43, but didn't look a day past his prime against Pavlik.
Future: Wants the Calzaghe-Roy Jones winner. But who knows, maybe B-Hop will defy expectations one last time and retire on top.

Hopkins' right scored repeatedly against Pavlik

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

5. ISRAEL **VAZQUEZ** World Junior Featherweight Champion 43-4 (31)

Last Year's Ranking: 5
Status Report: Somehow, his fights with Rafael Marquez just keep getting better. The rubber match was probably the best of the trilogy so far and will likely earn Vazquez and Marquez their second straight Fight of the Year award, with the champ rallying from an early knockdown and deficit to pull out the split decision with a dramatic final-round assault. That was Vazquez' only fight in the last 12 months, but it provided enough action for three fights.
Future: Taking off the rest of '08, then looking at a possible fourth fight with Marquez in '09.

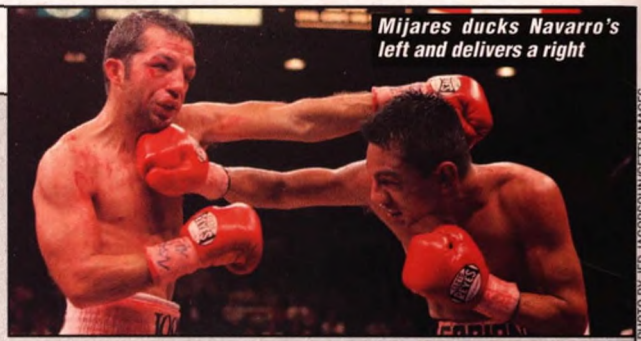
5 ISRAEL VAZQUEZ

6. ANTONIO **MARGARITO** WBA Welterweight Titleholder 37-5 (27) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 19
Status Report: How do you respond to a heartbreaking, momentum-halting loss like "Tono's" July '07 points defeat to Paul Williams? By knocking out three opponents in a row and enjoying a career year and an overdue defining victory. Mexican tuned up unworthy Golden Johnson (KO 1), battered hard-hitting Kermit Cintron (KO 6), and then surprised many experts by wearing down pound-for-pounder Miguel Cotto (KO 11) in a grueling battle that lived up to the hype.
Future: The tentative plan is a not-overly-threatening opponent in January or February and a rematch with Cotto in June.

7. CRISTIAN **MIJARES**
WBC/WBA Super Flyweight Titleholder 36-3-2 (15)

Last Year's Ranking: 31
Status Report: His 2007 campaign gave us a hint that this Mexican southpaw might be a special fighter; his 2008 campaign has confirmed it. Since the last RING 100, Mijares whipped hapless Franck Gorjux (KO 1), outboxed solid Jose Navarro (W 12), unified two alphabet belts against Alexander Munoz (W 12), and hammered veteran Chatchai Sasakul (KO 3). He's 26, fights often, and looks good every time out. What's not to like?
Future: Another unification bout with Vic Darchinyan was scheduled for November. Hopefully, a clash with Fernando Montiel for the vacant RING title will follow in '09.


Mijares ducks Navarro's left and delivers a right
PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

8. RAFAEL **MARQUEZ** Junior Featherweight 37-5 (33)

Last Year's Ranking: 7
Status Report: On paper, a year in which you fight only one time and win zero times should be a year in which you drop significantly in the pound-for-pound rankings. But if you saw Marquez' rubber match defeat at the hands of Israel Vazquez, you know why he's barely dipped. He outboxed his rival in many rounds, was as game and gutsy as they come, but faded late and lost by a single point. This was a special fight in which there really were no losers.
Future: Enjoying a well-deserved rest, and possibly headed for a fourth war with Vazquez next year.

9. MIGUEL **COTTO**
Welterweight 32-1 (26)

Last Year's Ranking: 10
Status Report: Puerto Rico's most popular fighter held steady in the pound-for-pound ranks by tallying both his most significant win and his first defeat within the last 12 months. Showed versatile boxing skills to eke out a close one over Sugar Shane Mosley (W 12) in November '07, but caved under the relentless pressure of Antonio Margarito (KO by 11) in July '08. In between, looked sharp winning a gimme over Alfonso Gomez (KO 5).
Future: Expected to return in February in Puerto Rico, then probably face Margarito again in June. It'll be a tough loss to reverse, but more bodypunching would be a place to start.

Cotto drills Mosley with a right
PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

10. IVAN **CALDERON** World Junior Flyweight Champion 32-0 (6)

Last Year's Ranking: 20
Status Report: Little guys are supposed to decelerate by age 33, but if anything, "Iron Boy" just keeps getting better. His first three 108-pound title defenses all came against quality foes: Juan Esquer (W 12), Nelson Dieppa (W 12), and the man from whom he took the championship, Hugo Cazares (Tech. Win 7). Diminutive southpaw can't punch and isn't everyone's favorite to watch, but he's one skilled little boxer.
Future: Suffered a bad cut on his forehead against Cazares and will be out the remainder of '08. Talking about moving up to flyweight, though he still makes junior fly without much trouble.

6 ANTONIO MARGARITO

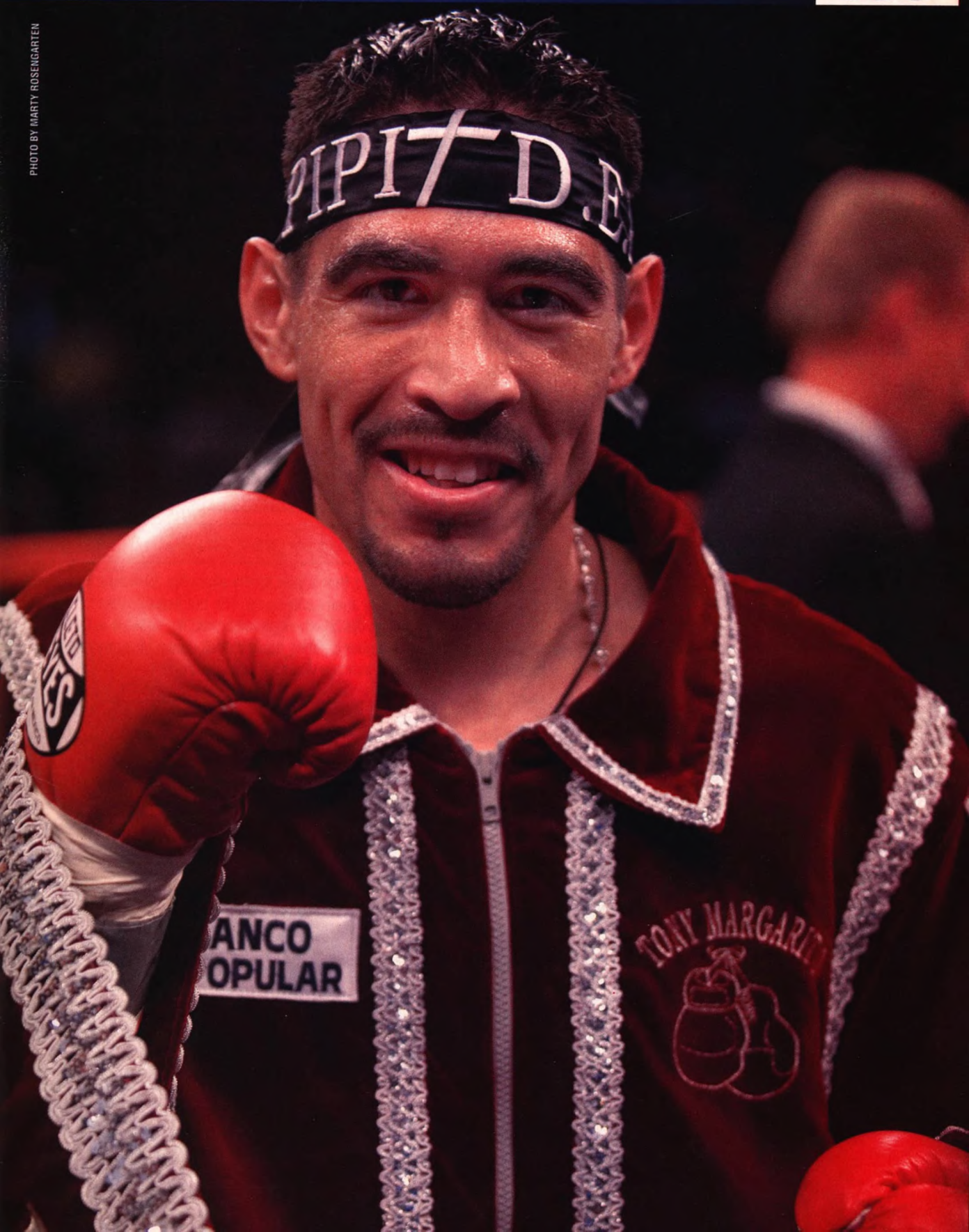


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

11. KELLY **PAVLIK** World Middleweight Champion 34-1 (30)

Last Year's Ranking: 23
Status Report: What an extraordinary breakthrough year … and what a shocking momentum killer at the end of it. "The Ghost" was labeled the future of American boxing for his exciting style, passionate fan base, and impressive wins over Jermain Taylor (KO 7, W 12) and Gary Lockett (KO 3). But the undisputed 160-pound champ tried moving up to 170 to add Bernard Hopkins' legendary name to his resume in October, and the move backfired as the veteran befuddled him at every turn.
Future: Back to middleweight and probably a get-well win over mandatory challenger Marco Antonio Rubio. Reasonable to expect that Hopkins loss will make him better in the long run.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Williams en route to vengeance versus Quintana

12. PAUL **WILLIAMS** Welterweight 35-1 (26)

Last Year's Ranking: 18
Status Report: How do you move up several spots in The Ring 100 after losing in one of the year's biggest upsets? By bouncing back with a vengeance and making that loss look like nothing more than an off-night. Got outmaneuvered by Carlos Quintana in February and dropped a close decision, then proceeded to gain revenge four months later via one-round beatdown. Looked equally devastating in his next fight, winning his middleweight debut over Andy Kolle in 97 seconds.
Future: Open to big fights anywhere from 147 to 160 pounds. If he's patient, maybe a rematch with Antonio Margarito—whom he already beat once—for the undisputed welter title will materialize.

13. RICKY **HATTON** World Junior Welterweight Champion 44-1 (31)

Last Year's Ranking: 9
Status Report: If you're going to lose an undefeated record that you spent a decade compiling, you may as well do it against the best fighter in the world. In losing to Floyd Mayweather (KO by 10), "The Hitman" suffered a loss that might have been emotionally crushing if not for the fact that it was totally expected. Got back in the win column against Juan Lazcano (W 12), but looked vulnerable. May have turned an old 30 when he celebrated his birthday in October.
Future: November defense against slick Paulie Malignaggi just the sort of fight to indicate whether Hatton still has it.

14. SHANE **MOSLEY** Welterweight 45-5 (38) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 13
Status Report: At a time when many older fighters are having surprising success, the 37-year-old Sugar Shane is aging as gracefully as any of them. Gave the decade-younger Miguel Cotto all he could handle en route to losing a flip-a-coin decision last November, took an unintended 10-month layoff, and closed the show in style at the end of a tougher-than-expected tussle with Ricardo Mayorga (KO 12) in September.
Future: Understandably, says he's only interested in big-money fights at this stage. Comfort fighting in two divisions, welter and junior middle, keeps his options open.

PHOTO BY STEPHEN DUNN/GETTY IMAGES

De La Hoya drives an uppercut into Forbes' face

15. OSCAR **DE LA HOYA** Junior Middleweight 39-5 (30)

Last Year's Ranking: 15
Status Report: Another year, another number 15 ranking for "The Golden Boy," his third in a row. It's been a year of starts, stops, and schedule adjustments, as De La Hoya's three-fight exit plan became a two-fight, don't-exit plan following Floyd Mayweather's retirement. In the ring, De La Hoya was solid but unspectacular in his lone outing, a clinical win over undersized Stevie Forbes (W 12) that drew an impressive crowd of 27,000.
Future: They're calling December 6 showdown with Manny Pacquiao "The Dream Fight." Oscar must win, or else it becomes something of a nightmare.

14 SHANE MOSLEY

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

16. FERNANDO **MONTIEL** Junior Bantamweight 37-2-1 (28)

Last Year's Ranking: 63
Status Report: Long considered a tantalizing talent, "El Cochulito" finally put it all together this year, particularly in blowing out highly regarded Martin Castillo (KO 4) in February in what was supposed to be a pick-'em fight. Before that, well-rounded boxer-puncher prevailed in a thriller over Luis Melendez (KO 12), and in his most recent fight, he crushed the usually durable Luis Maldonado (KO 3).
Future: Expected to fight two more times late in the year, including a possible December rematch against Z Gorres, who took Montiel to a split decision in '07.

17. NATE **CAMPBELL**
IBF/WBA Lightweight Titleholder 32-5-1 (25)

Last Year's Ranking: 78
Status Report: One of this year's biggest climbers, "The Galaxxy Warrior" stunned the experts with his decision win (which was split, but certainly should have been unanimous) over the previously red-hot Juan Diaz. After a late start in the game, Campbell is a relatively fresh 36 years old with tremendous in-ring maturity, and he beat Diaz by having a better game plan and simply wanting it more.
Future: Got screwed out of a payday in September when Joan Guzman failed to make weight and backed out, but remains in line for major fights at 135. Mandatory Ali Funeka, a minor fight, may come first.

PHOTO BY DAVID MARTIN-WARR/DKP

Campbell on the attack against Diaz

18. ARTHUR **ABRAHAM** IBF Middleweight Titleholder 27-0 (22)

Last Year's Ranking: 24
Status Report: Rapidly gaining respect as one of the sport's most destructive knockout punchers, "King Arthur" scored three explosive kayos this year, taking care of ordinary Wayne Elcock (KO 5) and Elvin Ayala (KO 12) before scoring a career-best fourth-round knockout of Edison Miranda in his U.S. debut. That was a big improvement over the Germany-based Armenian's first fight with Miranda, where Abraham's jaw was broken and he won a controversial decision.
Future: Had to postpone mandatory with Raul Marquez due to flu-like symptoms, but should have stopped the veteran by the time you read this. Hopefully, Kelly Pavlik fight can happen next year.

19. CHRIS **JOHN** WBA Featherweight Titleholder 41-0-1 (22)

Last Year's Ranking: 16
Status Report: On the one hand, he gains pound-for-pound ground every time Juan Manuel Marquez climbs higher among the elite, because the Indonesian "Dragon" holds a 2006 points win over Marquez. On the other hand, what has he done since then? Fought only once in the last 12 months, defeating Roinet Caballero (KO 7) to score his fourth straight title defense against a no-hoper.
Future: Was finally scheduled to face a real challenger, unbeaten Hiroyuki Enoki, just after our press deadline.

20. MIKKEL **KESSLER**
WBA Super Middleweight Titleholder 40-1 (30)

Last Year's Ranking: 14
Status Report: Losing for the first time, against future Hall of Famer Joe Calzaghe in a competitive fight, caused only minimal harm to the Dane's P-4-P standing. But his rep took a bigger hit when he mismanaged his career in the aftermath, pulling out of a perfect Showtime match against Edison Miranda and instead fighting unknown Dimitri Sartison (KO 12). The tattooed "Viking Warrior" has ability and potential, but at the moment, he's going nowhere.
Future: Will have faced, and almost certainly beaten, Danilo Haussler by the time you read this. When he's ready again for a fight that fans care about, we wouldn't mind seeing him against the Jermain Taylor-Jeff Lacy winner.

PHOTO BY KELD NAVNTOFT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Kessler has Dimitri Sartison covering up

18 ARTHUR ABRAHAM

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

21. NONITO **DONAIRE**
IBF Flyweight Titleholder 19-1 (12)

Last Year's Ranking: 32
Status Report: Much to our disappointment, fought only once in the past 12 months, but looked sensational in dominating Luis Maldonado (KO 8). Confidence has soared in the wake of career-defining win over Vic Darchinyan last year, and it's turned 25-year-old Filipino into a flyweight force. Now he just needs to get busier, which he expects to now that he's switched promoters from Gary Shaw to Top Rank.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Maldonado takes a right hand from Donaire

Future: Was scheduled for a mandatory against anonymous South African Moruti Mthalane just after our press date.

22. JUAN **DIAZ** Lightweight 34-1 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: 21
Status Report: "The Baby Bull" may have suffered his first loss this year, but when you keep fighting nothing but quality opponents, you're bound to lose eventually. Diaz' nonstop schedule of world-class foes included Julio Diaz (KO 9), Nate Campbell (L 12), and Michael Katsidis (W 12), and if you saw how good he looked in the two fights he won, then you know why his Ring 100 position remained stable in spite of a loss.
Future: Just 25 and adding dimensions all the time, his best work is probably still ahead of him. Bout with true champ Juan Manuel Marquez a possibility for '09.

23. HOZUMI **HASEGAWA** WBC Bantamweight Titleholder 25-2 (9)

Last Year's Ranking: 29
Status Report: Skillful Japanese southpaw more or less marked time this year, turning back decent Italian Simone Maludrottu (W 12) in January, Uruguayan clubfighter Cristian Faccio (KO 2) in June, and solid Mexican Alejandro Valdez (KO 2) in October. Only losses came in third and fifth pro fights, both by four-round decision.
Future: Has never fought outside Japan, which may have to change for him to secure a truly meaningful bantamweight fight. Fellow titlists Anselmo Moreno, Joseph Agbeko, and Gerry Penalosa are all dangerous.

24. CELESTINO **CABALLERO** WBA Super Bantamweight Titleholder 30-2 (21)

Last Year's Ranking: 53
Status Report: Frighteningly skinny Panamanian—he's 5'11", 122 pounds—is also gradually proving himself frighteningly good. Added three more wins in the past year, all by knockout, denying former titlists Mauricio Pastrana (KO 8) and Lorenzo Parra (KO 12) as well as ordinary Elvis Mejia (KO 1). Might just be the best junior feather in the world, but can't crash the Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez party to prove it.
Future: Had a chance to at least build demand for a shot at the real title with highly intriguing alphabet unification on November 21 against Steve Molitor.

25. CHAD **DAWSON**
IBF Light Heavyweight Titleholder 27-0 (17) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 40
Status Report: Floyd Mayweather's pick for pound-for-pound king isn't quite there yet in our opinion, but it isn't impossible a year or two down the road. Speedy, skillful southpaw took on the best of the division's old guard this year, decisioning both Glen Johnson and Antonio Tarver over 12 rounds. Johnson fight was close and grueling, whereas "Bad Chad" was dominant against Tarver. Prior to those high-profile wins, obliterated Epifanio Mendoza (KO 4).

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Dawson's left beats Johnson's to the target

Future: May already be the best 175-pounder in the world, but it's not likely the Joe Calzaghe-Roy Jones winner will give him a chance to prove it.

22 JUAN DIAZ

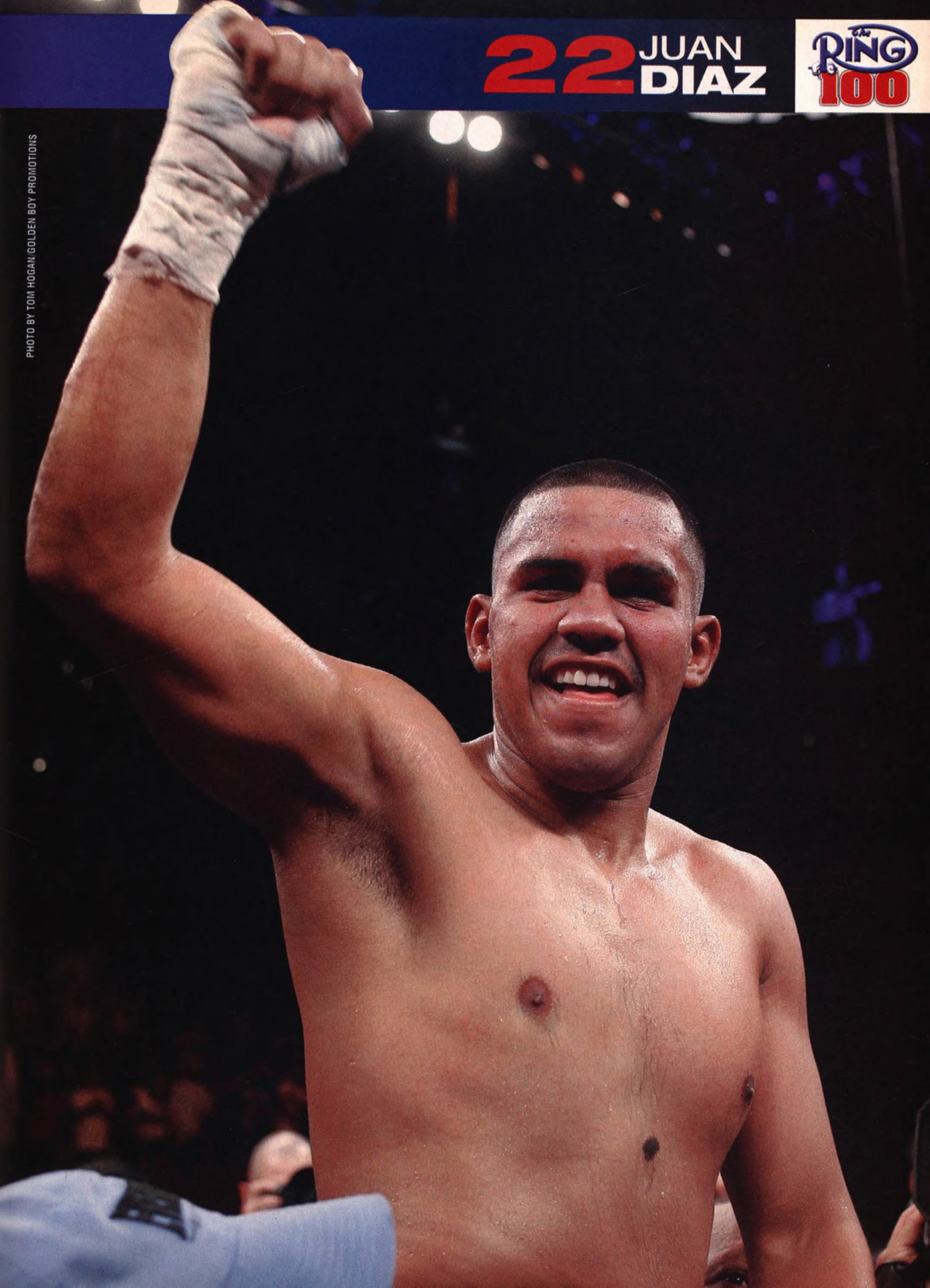
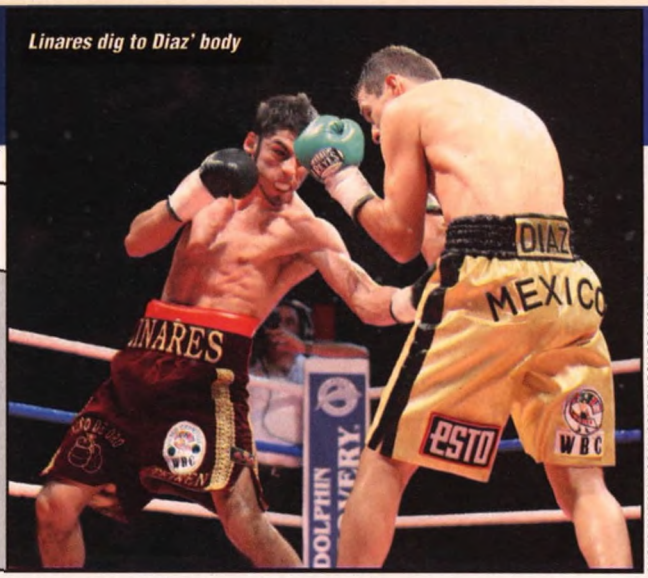


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS



Linares dig to Diaz' body

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

26. JORGE **LINARES**
WBC Featherweight Titleholder 25-0 (16)

Last Year's Ranking: 75
Status Report: This is one ranking based much more heavily on perceived ability and potential than actual accomplishment. Venezuelan "Golden Boy" fought only once in the past year due to ankle and shoulder injuries, but looked typically spectacular handling Gamaliel Diaz (KO 8). Has many tests to pass, but at 23, seems to have a world of talent and a great boxing brain.
Future: Moving up to 130 pounds, and may face little-known Sergey Gulyakevich for a vacant belt.

27. VERNON **FORREST** WBC Super Welterweight Titleholder 41-3 (29) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 22
Status Report: After an easy and meaningless win over Michele Piccirillo (KO 11) in December '07, suffered a seemingly career-derailing upset loss to Sergio Mora (L 12) in June '08—only to undo the damage with a dominant display (W 12) in the September rematch. A reasonably well-preserved 37, former lineal welter champ can still make a run for the Hall of Fame if he has a few more performances like the Mora rematch in him.
Future: Not many options at 154 for a money fight. May have to take on a dangerous younger fighter like Paul Williams to get back on HBO or Showtime.

28. JERMAIN **TAYLOR** Super Middleweight 27-2-1 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: 12
Status Report: Took a major step back with an 0-2 year, but the way it went down wasn't entirely discouraging. Lost perfect record and middleweight championship to Kelly Pavlik (KO by 7) last September, but earned points by coming to fight and nearly stopping "The Ghost" in round two. In non-title rematch in February, fought on nearly even terms only to get hurt by a bodyshot late and drop a close 12-round decision. Still a work in progress at age 30, but one who's proven he can hang with the elite.
Future: November HBO showdown with former Olympic teammate Jeff Lacy has a make-or-break feel for both men.

29. JOAN **GUZMAN** Lightweight 28-0 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: 27
Status Report: This two-division former titlist may be growing rapidly, but his fan club is not. His only fight in the past year, a dull but convincing points win over dangerous Humberto Soto last November, said good things about the Dominican's pound-for-pound potential. But he let himself get woefully out of shape afterward (reports had him blowing up from 130 pounds to the 180-190 range), failed to make weight for a lightweight bout against Nate Campbell, and was then ruled unfit to fight by the commission doctor.
Future: It will be a long road back to restoring faith and regenerating interest. The talent is there, but the professionalism needs to catch up.

Soto thinks he's won, but he hasn't

PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

30. HUMBERTO **SOTO**
Junior Lightweight 45-7-2 (29) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 26
Status Report: Combination-punching Mexican technically had a 2-2 campaign, but you'd have a hard time finding anyone other than Joe Cortez who doesn't consider it a 3-1 year. Lost a 12-round decision to slick Joan Guzman, scored a get-well win over Carlos Urias (KO 5), and then suffered the ultimate screw job at the hands of Cortez via fourth-round DQ against Francisco Lorenzo. Soto knocked Lorenzo out with clean punches, landed a late love tap, and got ripped off. Bounced back to easily beat Gamaliel Diaz (KO 10).
Future: While the rest of the best 130-pounders scamper up to 135, we'd love to see him deal with the incoming talent, like Jorge Linares and Robert Guerrero.

27 VERNON FORREST

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Naito tries to cut Shimizu in half with a bodyshot

PHOTO BY TOSHIFUMI KITAMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

32. DAISUKE **NAITO**
WBC Flyweight Titleholder 33-2-3 (21)

Last Year's Ranking: 33
Status Report: The man who ended Pongsaklek Wonjongkam's lengthy title reign continued his winnings ways, more or less, the last 12 months. He easily handled popular Daiki Kameda (W 12) last October, looked unlucky to have to settle for a 12-round draw in March in his fourth fight with Pongsaklek, then came from behind to kayo novice Tomonobu Shimizu (KO 10) in July. At age 34, that struggle makes you wonder if Naito has peaked.
Future: A fight against Koki Kameda, Daiki's undefeated brother, would be huge in Japan.

31. ALEXANDER **MUNOZ** Junior Bantamweight 32-3 (27)

Last Year's Ranking: 30
Status Report: "El Explosivo" made two successful defenses in his second title reign, turning back inexperienced Kuniyuki Aizawa (W 12) and former titlist Katsushige Kawashima (W 12), before running into the magnificent Cristian Mijares and losing clearly but competitively by decision in an alphabet unification bout. The Venezuelan's punches were simply too wide and slow against a crafty sharpshooter like Mijares.
Future: Can still beat anyone at junior bantam except for the most superbly skilled boxers. If he could land a fight with a slugger like Jorge Arce, that would be perfect for him.

33. JOSHUA **CLOTTEY** IBF Welterweight Titleholder 35-2 (20) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 74
Status Report: It was a strong year all-around for this Ghanaian strongman, who went 3-0, grabbed his first alphabet belt (for what that's worth), and got extra credit when Antonio Margarito beat Miguel Cotto because Clottey had given Margarito such difficulty two years ago. Wins over Shamone Alvarez (W 12) and Jose Luis Cruz (KO 5) were both noteworthy, but the biggie was his victory over Zab Judah (Tech. Win 9) in an entertaining fight.
Future: As you might expect, the bigger names aren't dying to fight him. Needs to stay busy and keep winning, and maybe a rematch with Margarito will come eventually.

34. JUAN MANUEL **LOPEZ**
Junior Featherweight 23-0 (21)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Since failing to make last year's rankings because he was still a highly unproven prospect, the Puerto Rican southpaw has won four times in a total of seven rounds. The win that assured him of a spot in The Ring 100 came against the dangerous Daniel Ponce De Leon (KO 1), but almost as impressive were wipeouts of Omar Adorno (KO 2), Jonathan Oquendo (KO 3), and Cesar Figueroa (KO 1). And you wouldn't know it from all the knockouts, but the 2004 Olympian is just as slick as he is powerful.
Future: By the end of '09, should be ready for Israel Vazquez, Rafael Marquez—anyone at 122.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Lopez finishes Ponce De Leon in the first

35. DAVID **HAYE** Heavyweight 21-1 (20)

Last Year's Ranking: 100
Status Report: A bit tricky to rank because he's technically a heavyweight now and we don't even know if he's world-class as that weight, but his exceptional year at cruiserweight accounts for a massive jump in The Ring 100. Rose from a knockdown to starch world cruiser champ Jean-Marc Mormeck (KO 7) last November, then brushed aside the supposedly dangerous challenge of Enzo Maccarinelli in just two rounds in March. Brash Brit is a superior puncher—at least as a cruiserweight.
Future: Could be the next big thing at heavyweight, or just the next big flop. November 15 fight against Monte Barrett should have given you a hint by the time you read this.

33 JOSHUA CLOTTEY

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Gonzalez upsets Niida for alphabet strap

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

37. ROMAN GONZALEZ
WBA Minimumweight Titleholder 21-0 (19)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Four reasons to get excited about "El Chocolatito": He's only 21, he's a natural puncher, he needed only four rounds to bludgeon long-reigning Yutaka Niida in September, and it was his fifth fight of 2008. Nicaraguan doesn't have many other quality names on his resume, but the two best, Eriberto Gejon and Jose Luis Varela, both met the same fate, falling in a single round.
Future: There's still a ton to prove, but in terms of potential to capture the imagination, he's the best strawweight to come along since Ricardo Lopez.

36. GLEN JOHNSON Light Heavyweight 47-12-2 (32)

Last Year's Ranking: 46
Status Report: Just when we think the 39-year-old Jamaican might be slowing down, he gives a prime titleholder like Chad Dawson life and death en route to a disputed decision loss. Prior to that, he easily handled blown-up welterweight Hugo Pineda (KO 8) in an off-TV bout. "The Road Warrior" is the classic grizzled vet who refuses to act his age, and he remains a threat to any light heavyweight out there.
Future: Left out of the big-time fights at 175, so a smaller fight on Showtime against up-and-comer Shaun George is being considered for January.

38. HUGO CAZARES Flyweight 26-5-1 (19)

Last Year's Ranking: 41
Status Report: Former RING 108-pound champ had a forgettable 1-1 year, but at least came away sure of which weight class he should be in. Ten-round unanimous decision over faded Kermin Guardia in January was a marking-time affair, and junior fly championship rematch with Ivan Calderon ended in a disappointing seventh-round technical decision loss. It was anticlimactic and left some questions, but it also provided answers on the foolishness of the 30-year-old Mexican trying to make 108 pounds anymore.
Future: Officially a flyweight now, and it's a fairly interesting division. Cazares needs a top-10 win and he's right in the title mix.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Casamayor clocks Katsidis

39. JOEL CASAMAYOR
Lightweight 36-4-1 (22)

Last Year's Ranking: 17
Status Report: What a weird down-up-down year it was for the Cuban veteran. Looked totally washed-up against Jose Armando Santa Cruz only to retain the world lightweight title on one of the most unfathomable decisions in boxing history, looked youthful again in dramatic come-from-behind win over Michael Katsidis (KO 10), and then suffered his first-ever knockout loss in a competitive battle with Juan Manuel Marquez (KO by 11).
Future: A downward trajectory appears likely. Still in the title mix at 37, but one more loss would turn him into a gatekeeper.

40. ULISES SOLIS IBF Light Flyweight Titleholder 27-1-2 (20)

Last Year's Ranking: 47
Status Report: Made two more successful title defenses, bringing his total to seven, by whipping journeyman Bert Batawang (KO 9) in December '07 and shutting out the lesser of the Donaire brothers, Glenn, on all three cards in July '08. "Archie" was supposed to fight again in September, but had to postpone the fight due to illness.
Future: We wish his people would push for a shot at Ivan Calderon, a legitimately meaningful fight for hardcore fans of the little guys. In the meantime, had an October fight set against Nerys Espinoza.

40 ULISES SOLIS

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

41. VERNO PHILLIPS IBF Junior Middleweight Titleholder 42-10-1 (21) with 1 no-contest

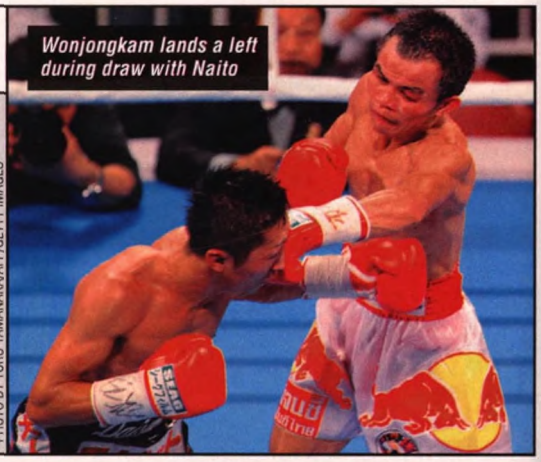
Last Year's Ranking: 94
Status Report: Winning a decision over Cory Spinks in St. Louis isn't easy, but Denver veteran did precisely that in March—and he didn't even have to dominate the hometown fighter to do it. Somehow, in a close fight, the decision went Phillips' way, propelling him back to the upper echelon of the 154-pound division at age 38. Unfortunately, that was Phillips' only fight since February '07. These long layoffs aren't doing him any favors.
Future: Proposed defense against John Duddy didn't happen, and a possible meeting with Paul Williams was being discussed as of press time.

42. CORY SPINKS Junior Middleweight 36-5 (11)

Last Year's Ranking: 25
Status Report: Not having a lot of luck with the judges lately, and when you have less than a 27 percent knockout rate, you'd better have a little luck with the judges. Followed up last year's split decision loss to Jermain Taylor with split decision loss to Verno Phillips. That fight was broadcast over the Internet because no TV networks were interested.
Future: Let's see … he's boring, he can't punch, the networks don't want him, and he's now lost two straight and three of his last five. Despite the 30-year-old's considerable skills, the future isn't overly bright.

43. PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM
Flyweight 68-3-1 (36)

Last Year's Ranking: 34
Status Report: In first year since 2000 without a title belt, three victories—over Rey Migreno (W 8), Jack Amisa (KO 2), and Mohammed Akbar (KO 6)—all meant nothing, despite serving to keep him sharp and earn him paychecks. Only significant fight came against Daisuke Naito, the man who took WBC belt from long-reigning Thai, and ended in a 12-round draw. Consensus opinion was that Naito deserved the win, but Pongsaklek showed there's still gas in the tank by at least keeping it close.
Future: Is 2-1-1 against Naito, and still ranked highly by the WBC, so a fifth fight isn't out of the question.


Wonjongkam lands a left during draw with Naito
PHOTO BY TORU YAMANAKA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

44. TAKEFUMI SAKATA
WBA Flyweight Titleholder 33-4-2 (15)

Last Year's Ranking: 39
Status Report: Though he still has his alphabet belt, momentum has cooled since exceptional run where he beat Lorenzo Parra and Roberto Vasquez in succession, thanks to a disappointing draw against Denkaosan Kaovichit last November. Followed that up with defenses against second-rater Shingo Yamaguchi (W 12) and third-rater Hiroyuki Hisataka (W 12) and didn't look great in either one.
Future: Countryman Koki Kameda is his mandatory, and that fight would be huge in Japan. It would also give us a clearer picture of how good Sakata is.

Sakata rocks Hisataka with a right
PHOTO BY TOSHIFUMI KITAMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

45. ZSOLT ERDEI Light Heavyweight 29-0 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: 43
Status Report: If extending your alphabet title reign by fighting unworthy nobodies on your home turf were an art form, Erdei would be Picasso. Skilled, but apparently reluctant, the Germany-based Hungarian added two more defenses this year, one a competitive fight against faded former middleweight contender Tito Mendoza (W 12) and the other a one-sided bout against utterly anonymous DeAndrey Abron (W 12). We guess this sort of match-making, which the WBO seemingly supports, pays Erdei's bills, but it won't leave him with much of a legacy.
Future: After nearly five years of this nonsense, why should we expect anything to change now?

45 ZSOLT ERDEI

PHOTO BY ROBERT MICHAEL/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

46. WLADIMIR **KLITSCHKO** IBF Heavyweight Titleholder 51-3 (45)

Last Year's Ranking: 55
Status Report: Not a great year for the world's leading heavyweight from an entertainment standpoint, but that's not what THE RING 100 is about; in terms of efficiency and in-ring succesws, it was a productive year for "Dr. Steelhammer." Added WBO belt to his collection by controlling Sultan Ibragimov (W 12) with his jab, and then took care of a mandatory defense against tricky but outgunned Tony Thompson (KO 11).
Future: After two straight fights against cautious southpaws, was scheduled to for December 13 defense against aggressive, orthodox, and unbeaten Alexander Povetkin. But Povetkin injured his foot training, and a substitute challenger was still being sought when he went to press.

Vitali aims a jab at Peter
PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

47. VITALI **KLITSCHKO**
WBC Heavyweight Titleholder 36-2 (35)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Former RING heavyweight champion can't quite reclaim his old spot (number 27 in 2005) based on one comeback win, but if you ask us, he looked as good at age 37 against Sam Peter (KO 8) as he did before retiring. Used his height and reach masterfully, landed every punch in the book, and never overexerted himself, winning every round until the Nigerian quit on his stool. He was the best big man around when he left the sport, and when he's healthy, he might still be the best.
Future: Will never fight his brother, which means we won't see an undisputed champion until one of them loses or leaves.

48. EDWIN **VALERO**
WBA Super Featherweight Titleholder 24-0 (24)

Last Year's Ranking: 50
Status Report: Two more fights, two more knockouts, and one piece of very significant news. Venezuelan phenom hammered Zaid Zavaleta (KO 3) last December and Takehiro Shimada (KO 7) in June, but the big breakthrough came when the Texas commission granted him a boxing license despite a questionable brain scan due to an old motorcycling injury. Now training with Kenny Adams, who's trying to smooth the rough edges before he fights in America.
Future: Moving up to lightweight, where he'll probably face Antonio Pitalua for an interim belt.

Undefeated Valero tears into Shimada
PHOTO BY TORU YAMANAKA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

49. ROBERT **GUERRERO** Junior Lightweight 22-1-1 (15) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 85
Status Report: After a couple of years of inconsistency, "The Ghost" delivered big-time in both of his bouts over the last 12 months, scoring a pair of knockouts over good, young fighters. Fighting with a heavy heart after learning that his wife had leukemia, wiped out Martin Honorio (KO 1), then prevailed in an entertaining but one-sided fight against Jason Litzau (KO 8). Just as he was establishing himself as perhaps the world's best featherweight, elected to give up alphabet belt and move up to 130.
Future: Nothing scheduled as of press time, but Guerrero vs. Rocky Juarez sounds like an excellent TV fight to us.

50. STEVE **MOLITOR** IBF Junior Featherweight Titleholder 28-0 (11)

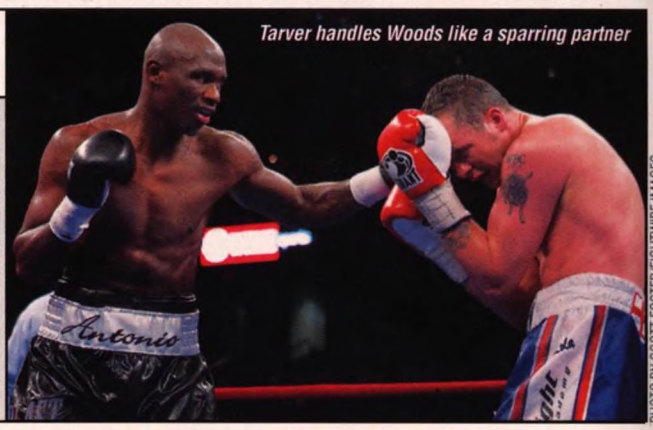
Last Year's Ranking: 79
Status Report: Canadian lefty enjoyed a productive year, making four successful title defenses and losing only a handful of rounds along the way. Fighting before enthusiastic crowds at the Casino Rama in Ontario, had his way with Fahsan 3K Battery (W 12), Ricardo Castillo (W 12), Fernando Beltran Jr. (W 12), and Ceferino Labarda (KO 10).
Future: Last year in this spot we wrote, "How about a match with Celestino Caballero?" It's an excellent fight on paper, and it was scheduled to come off on November 21, with the winner in great position for a shot at the legit championship.

46 WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

51. ANTONIO **TARVER**
Light Heavyweight 27-5 (19)

Last Year's Ranking: 44
Status Report: "The Magic Man" still talks a good game, but for the third straight year, he slides down in THE RING 100 rankings. Fought well against hapless Danny Santiago (KO 4) last December and surprisingly lifeless Clinton Woods (W 12) in April, but 39-year-old looked his age in tough matchup against gifted Chad Dawson (L 12) in October. Just didn't have the fast-twitch reflexes required to keep up.
Future: Can still beat most light heavies, just not the very best. If he wants to fight on, maybe it's worth trying cruiserweight, where he'll be faster than most opponents.


Tarver handles Woods like a sparring partner
PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

52. NOBUO **NASHIRO** Junior Bantamweight 12-1 (7)

Last Year's Ranking: 42
Status Report: A very peculiar case, Japanese prospect was rushed into a title shot and won and lost belt within his first 10 fights, and has since taken a slower road. Fought three times in the past year, beginning with two insignificant third-round knockouts of Petchklongpai Sor Thantip and Sairung Suwanasil. Then won a one-point split decision over little-known Kohei Kono to claim a bogus vacant belt.
Future: Kono scare suggests he could use some more on-the-job training before tangling with the division's best again.

53. VIC **DARCHINYAN** IBF Junior Bantamweight Titleholder 30-1-1 (24)

Last Year's Ranking: 60
Status Report: When your persona is built around cockiness, the first loss can be a devastating one (see Naseem Hamed), but Armenian-Australian "Raging Bull" coped with defeat fairly well. He moved up from flyweight to junior bantam, eased back in against journeyman Federico Catubay (KO 12), didn't look so sharp against solid Z Gorres (D 12), and then performed as sensationally as ever in taking the IBF 115-pound belt from Dimitri Kirilov (KO 5).
Future: Must still have a darned high level of confidence if he agreed to fight the masterful Cristian Mijares in November.

54. ANSELMO **MORENO**
WBA Bantamweight Titleholder 23-1-1 (8)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Panamanian southpaw may not be a big banger, but he appears to have the rest of the package. Surprised previously unbeaten Wladimir Sidorenko via unanimous decision on the defending titlist's turf in Germany in May, then was shutting out Cecilio Santos in first defense in September before settling for a seven-round technical win due to a clash of heads. Only loss came by four-round decision in '02 and was twice avenged.
Future: At just 23 years old, should be a player for years to come. There's been talk of a defense against Eric Morel, which would be a nice veteran name to get on his resume.

Santos absorbs a right from Moreno
PHOTO BY SKY GILBERT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

55. CARLOS **QUINTANA** Welterweight 25-2 (19)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Lots of fighters had up-and-down (or down-and-up) years, but perhaps none was more extreme than the year "El Indio" had. Skillful Puerto Rican southpaw outsmarted and outhustled previously undefeated Paul Williams (W 12) in February en route to one of the year's biggest upsets, but came crashing back to earth in the rematch, tasting the canvas twice on his way to a first-round kayo loss in June. Probably fair to say he isn't as good as he looked in the first fight or as bad as he looked in the second one.
Future: Is considering a move up to 154, a thinner division where he can make some noise.

53 VIC DARCHINYAN

56. ZAB JUDAH Welterweight 36-6 (25) with 2 no-contests

Last Year's Ranking: 36
Status Report: To his credit, "Super" Judah is now 2-4 with 1 no-contest in his last seven fights and remains a contender. That's because the losses have all come against quality fighters and have generally been competitive, as was the case with his most recent defeat, a close ninth-round technical decision loss to tough Joshua Clottey. Before that, Judah cruised in an off-TV tuneup bout against clubfighter Ryan Davis (W 12).
Future: Weighed only 143 for the Clottey fight and says he can make junior welter. Things aren't working out well for him at welterweight anymore, so why not drop down to a less talent-packed division?

57. OMAR NARVAEZ Flyweight 28-0-2 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: 57
Status Report: 2000 Olympian has turned into a fine, long-reigning WBO titlist, but the close watch on his pursuit of Carlos Monzon's record for title defenses by an Argentine has to stop. Monzon was a true world champion, whereas Narvaez has never tangled with anyone in his division's top five. But he has been busy, making defenses this year against Marlon Marquez (KO 4), Carlos Tamara (W 12), Ivan Pozo (KO 8), and Alejandro Hernandez (W 12) to run his total to 14.
Future: Seems comfortable fighting in Argentina and occasionally Europe without ever calling out any fellow titlists. So expect another year of the same.

58. STEVE CUNNINGHAM
IBF Cruiserweight Titleholder 21-1 (11)

Cunningham has Huck under pressure

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Last Year's Ranking: 67
Status Report: Arguably the world's best cruiserweight with David Haye having left the division, but got only one chance to further that argument in the past 12 months, and came through in style with an exciting 12th-round TKO of previously unbeaten Marco Huck in Germany. Talented, well-spoken Philadelphian remains woefully underexposed in America, though an impressive studio appearance on *Friday Night Fights* was a help.
Future: Tough fight against Tomasz Adamek will happen on December 11 and will fill THE RING championship vacancy. More good news for Cunningham: A large audience will be able to watch it on Versus.

59. ROY JONES Light Heavyweight 52-4 (38)

Last Year's Ranking: 64
Status Report: Former pound-for-pound king sneaks up a few spots by doing the expected in his lone fight in the past year, comfortably outpointing the inactive and smaller Felix Trinidad at Madison Square Garden in January. Safe matchmaking or not, deserves credit for returning to prominence and winning three straight after giving off the appearance of a shot fighter in 2004 and 2005.
Future: There's a good chance the winning streak will have ended at the hands of Joe Calzaghe by the time you read this, but if not, Jones will return to a lofty P-4-P listing.

60. ANTHONY MUNDINE
Super Middleweight 33-3 (23)

Mundine jolts Hamdan with a right

PHOTO BY CAMERON SPENCER/GETTY IMAGES

Last Year's Ranking: 71
Status Report: Aussie didn't have much interest in a rematch with the last man to beat him, Mikkel Kessler, so he went ahead and tallied four wins over mixed opposition and eventually gave up his alphabet belt. Jose Alberto Clavero (KO 4), Nader Hamdan (W 12), and Crazy Kim (W 10) were all easy, while Sam Soliman (W 12) presented a little bit more of a challenge.
Future: Backed out of a November bout against *The Contender* alum Miguel Espino and doesn't have anything else planned. A rematch with the currently retired Danny Green is possible.

59 ROY JONES

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

61. LUCIAN **BUTE** IBF Super Middleweight Titleholder 22-0 (18)

Last Year's Ranking: 86
Status Report: Proved worthy of the hype coming out of Canada by claiming his first major title last October via brutal 11th-round knockout of Alejandro Berrio. Enjoyed a very soft first defense, barely breaking a sweat against used-up William Joppy (KO 10) in February. Southpaw is a well-rounded boxer-puncher vaguely reminiscent of a younger Joe Calzaghe.
Future: If he's the heir apparent to Calzaghe's throne, will need to get past iron-jawed Librado Andrade just after our press deadline.

62. PAULIE **MALIGNAGGI** Junior Welterweight 25-1 (5)

Last Year's Ranking: 72
Status Report: It may seem odd, but "The Magic Man" had a disappointing year tallying two successful title defenses against a pair of solid, world-class challengers. Coming off a dominant win over Lovemore Ndou in June '07 to win the IBF 140-pound strap, brash Brooklynite struggled to a narrow points over Herman Ngoudjo in January and then barely overcame a disaster with unruly hair extensions to take a split decision in the May rematch with Ndou. Sometimes, as Malignaggi learned, substance needs to be valued over style.
Future: Gave up IBF belt so he could challenge Ricky Hatton for the legitimate junior welterweight championship in a compelling clash of styles.

Malignaggi survives rematch with Ndou

PHOTO BY ALEX LIVESEY/GETTY IMAGES

63. TIMOTHY **BRADLEY** WBC Super Lightweight Titleholder 23-0 (11)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: "Desert Storm" made a sudden and unexpected leap from *ShoBox* prospect to major beltholder with upset decision in May over Junior Witter for the WBC trinket. Most experts thought it was too soon for 25-year-old Californian, but sixth-round knockdown made the difference in a close fight. Looked sharp in first defense, comfortably outpointing fringe contender Edner Cherry. Not a fighter where any attribute leaps off the TV screen at you, but very solid and well-schooled all around.
Future: Probably doesn't have the name yet to reel in winner of Ricky Hatton-Paulie Malignaggi. A fight with winner of Kendall Holt-Ricardo Torres III, however, would be attractive.

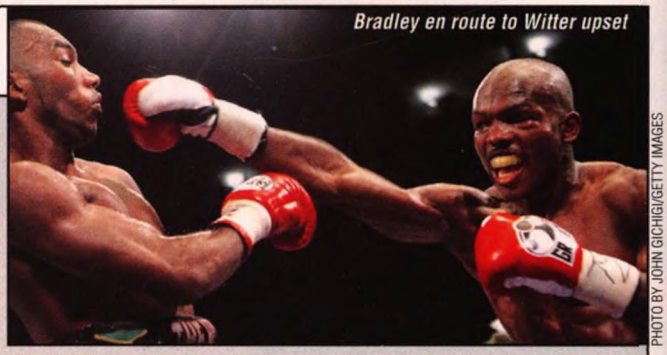

Bradley en route to Witter upset

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

64. ROBERTO **VASQUEZ** Flyweight 27-2 (20)

Last Year's Ranking: 58
Status Report: Bounced back from upset decision loss to Takefumi Sakata—his first defeat since his pro debut—by recording three straight quickie kayo wins over limited opposition. Jesus Lora (KO 2), Cesar Singo (KO 3), and Felipe Zapata (KO 1) all did their part to pad Vasquez' record and confidence, as "La Arana" tested out his body in the junior bantam and bantamweight divisions.
Future: With a 1-1 record in two close bouts against Sakata, a rubber match would make sense, assuming 25-year-old Panamanian can still make 112 pounds.

65. JULIO **DIAZ** Lightweight 35-4 (26)

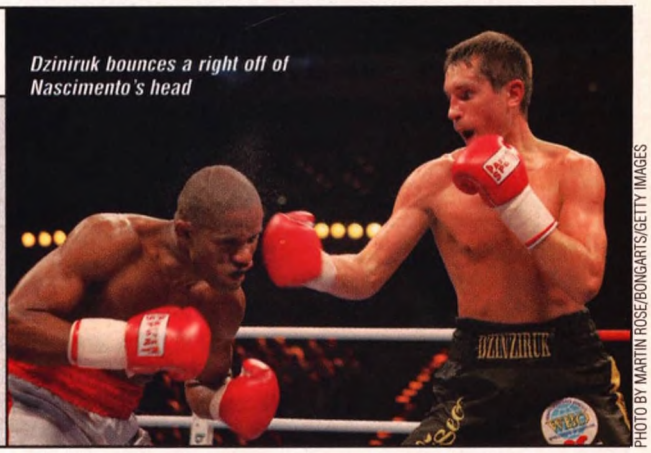
Last Year's Ranking: 35
Status Report: "The Kidd" isn't a kid anymore. If anything, at age 28, his prime appears to be in the rearview mirror. Granted, Juan Diaz is a tough nut for anyone, but Julio looked particularly impotent against him last October en route to surrendering at the start of the ninth round. Took a nine-month layoff and got back to his winning ways in June against undefeated but untested David Torres (KO 5).
Future: Doesn't belong in the ring with the very best lightweights, like Juan Manuel Marquez, Nate Campbell, or Manny Pacquiao. But this is a deep division, and fights against David Diaz or Michael Katsidis would be fun.

66. JUNIOR **WITTER** Junior Welterweight 36-2-2 (21)

Last Year's Ranking: 37
Status Report: After years of unsuccessfully calling out Ricky Hatton, grew stale either physically or mentally (or both) and lost a shocker to unproven Timothy Bradley in Nottingham, England, in May. Tasted the canvas in round six and defeat for the first time in eight years, losing a split decision that should have been unanimous.
Future: Maybe losing will help him finally land a big fight. For now, there's talk of a European title fight against Gianluca Branco, which Witter ought to win if he isn't totally used up.

67. SERGEI **DZINDZIRUK**
Junior Middleweight 35-0 (22)

Last Year's Ranking: 61
Status Report: Germany-based Ukrainian southpaw lost any hint of momentum by fighting only once in the past year, a majority decision win in April over Czech Lucas Konecny. Reputation helped somewhat, though, by the fact that the man from whom he took the WBO title, Daniel Santos, had a good year and grabbed a title belt himself.
Future: Rescheduled fight against talented Joel Julio, which will have happened by the time you read this, should give an indication of just how worthy a titlist Dzindziruk is.



Dziniruk bounces a right off of Nascimento's head

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

68. GERRY **PENALOSA**
Bantamweight 53-6-2 (36)

Last Year's Ranking: 68
Status Report: Comebacking Filipino had trouble finding the right fights and didn't build much on his momentum, entering the ring only once in the past year. Looked pretty good in that one appearance, though, halting fellow veteran Ratanachai Vorapin in eight rounds.
Future: At age 36, probably can't afford another unproductive year. Unbeaten prospect Abner Mares is his WBO mandatory, and that would be a toss-up crossroads fight.

Penalosa blasts Sor Vorapin to the floor

PHOTO BY JAY DIRECTO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

69. DANIEL **SANTOS** WBA Super Welterweight Titleholder 32-3-1 (23) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Inconsistent Puerto Rican southpaw, who's sometimes an exciting puncher and sometimes a defensive stinker, had a strong comeback year, beating up aging Jose Antonio Rivera (KO 8) and scoring a mild upset over undefeated Joachim Alcine (KO 6) to claim his third alphabet belt. Alcine fight was pretty much even until Santos' power produced a sudden finish.
Future: If he's really lucky, he can make some money if Antonio Margarito wants to move up in weight to avenge disputed 2004 loss. Otherwise, there aren't any particularly scintillating options for him at 154.

70. TOMASZ **ADAMEK** Cruiserweight 35-1 (24)

Last Year's Ranking: 83
Status Report: As exciting Pole continues to adjust to the 200-pound division, two insignificant fights—W 8 Josip Jalusic and KO 7 Gary Gomez—sandwiched an excellent eighth-round TKO win over former lineal champ O'Neil Bell. Although Bell's quitjob was the bigger story coming out of the fight, Adamek's performance also opened eyes and positioned him well in a wide-open division.
Future: Fight with Steve Cunningham on December 11, televised by Versus, will crown a new RING champion.

71. FELIX **STURM**
WBA Middleweight Titleholder 30-2-1 (13)

Last Year's Ranking: 70
Status Report: As time goes on, it gets harder to fathom how Oscar De La Hoya struggled so much against him in 2004. Not that the German is a bad fighter, but the fact that he could only manage a draw and then a close 12-round decision over fringe contender Randy Griffin suggests he's a notch or two below the elite. In between Griffin fights, dispatched anonymous Jamie Pittman in seven rounds.
Future: By the time you read this, will have fought countryman Sebastian Sylvester in what looks on paper like a toughie.

Sturm jabs his way to victory in Griffin rematch

PHOTO BY PATRIK STOLLARZ/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

72. LUIS **COLLAZO** Welterweight 29-3 (14)

Last Year's Ranking: 77
Status Report: After an 11-month layoff due in part to a hand injury, came back with a couple of shake-the-rust-off wins over Edvan Dos Santos Barros (W 10) and Russell Jordan (KO 8). Slick 27-year-old lefty still looking for a signature win since losing his two biggest fights, a disputed decision to Ricky Hatton and a decisive one to Shane Mosley.
Future: Should have a chance for that signature win in early-'09 as mandatory challenger to Andre Berto. Probably the underdog, but not by much.

73. SEBASTIAN **SYLVESTER** Middleweight 29-2 (14)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: German has been on a good run the last two years, culminating with a spectacular Knockout of the Year contender in April over veteran Javier Castillejo (KO 12). But his best win came in June '07, when he reversed a 2006 TKO loss to Amin Asikainen by knocking his rival out in the 11th round.
Future: Relinquished European middleweight title for a shot at Felix Sturm and the WBA belt, which will have happened by the time you read this.

74. SERGIO **MORA**
Junior Middleweight 21-1-1 (5)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Regardless of the result of his most recent fight, we all now have to admit: "The Latin Snake" is more than just some reality-show creation. Year got off to a bad start with 10-round draw against Elvin Ayala, got better with sixth-round stoppage of Rito Ruvalcaba, and got surprisingly good with a majority decision win over Vernon Forrest to claim WBC 154-pound strap. Although Forrest dominated him in the rematch three months later, has to be taken seriously now as not just *The Contender* but a contender.
Future: Wants a rubber match with Forrest, but struggles making weight for rematch have us wondering if a return to middleweight wouldn't be wiser.

Mora mashes Forrest's face

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

75. SERGIO **MARTINEZ** Junior Middleweight 44-1-1 (24)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: It took almost 11 years as a pro for Spain-based Argentine to get on everyone's radar, but hooking up with DiBella Entertainment and fighting four times in the U.S. in a 10-month span did just that. Wins over Russell Jordan (KO 4), David Toribio (W 4), and Archak Termeliksetian (KO 7) were useful, but it was one-sided whipping of Alex Bunema (KO 8) on HBO in October that made him a player. Quick-fisted, athletic, and seemingly a well-preserved 33.
Future: Junior middleweight isn't bursting with huge names, but there's a decent well of prospects and veterans to choose from. How about Sergio Martinez vs. Sergio Mora?

76. ROCKY **JUAREZ**
Junior Lightweight 28-4 (20)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: You have to say this for the 2000 U.S. Olympic silver medalist: He isn't afraid of a challenge. After back-to-back fights against Marco Antonio Barrera in 2006, took on another pound-for-pounder in November '07, losing to Juan Manuel Marquez via comprehensive decision. After 10-month layoff, took another tough fight, against Jorge Barrios, and overcame an early deficit to score a bloody 11th-round stoppage and pump much-needed life into his career.
Future: Nothing planned as of press time, but this much we can predict: Win or lose, in his next fight, Juarez will start slow and frustrate us by not punching enough.

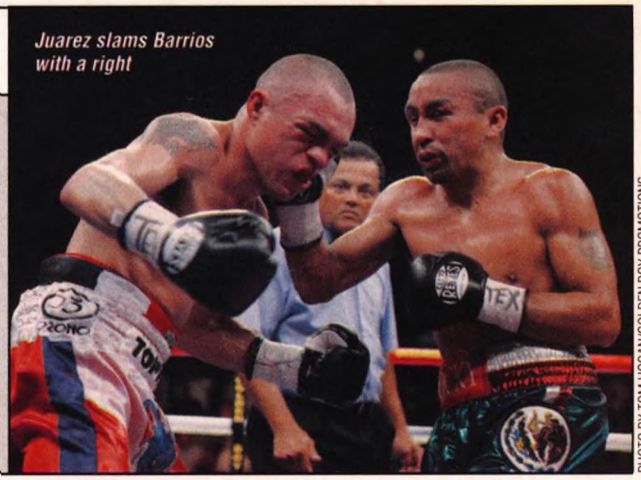

Juarez slams Barrios with a right

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

77. STEVEN **LUEVANO** Featherweight 35-1-1 (15)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Since winning vacant WBO title against Nicky Cook in July '07, got busy as a pay-per-view undercard staple, defending against Antonio Davis (W 12 on the Pacquiao-Barrera II undercard), Terdsak Jandaeng (W 12 on the Pacquiao-Marquez II show), Mario Santiago (D 12 underneath Pacquiao-Diaz), and Billy Dib (W 12) on the Hopkins-Pavlik bill). Southpaw has plenty of skill, but maybe a little too willing to trade, as in his unexpected thriller against Santiago.
Future: Fight with Santiago was fun and controversial; would anyone object to a rematch?

78. ANDRE **BERTO**
WBC Welterweight Titleholder 23-0 (19)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: At 25, moving faster than most of the rest of the Olympic class of '04 (no great feat there), and getting plenty of exposure with his last four fights all on HBO. Since a knockdown scare against Cosme Rivera in July '07, was dominant against David Estrada (KO 11), Michel Trabant (KO 6), Miki Rodriguez (KO 7), and Steve Forbes (W 12). Berto looks like the goods, but he's been a heavy favorite every time out, so there's still a lot to prove.
Future: Mandatory defense against Luis Collazo can go a long way toward proving his worth, as the southpaw represents Berto's first real top-10 opponent.

Berto stops Rodriguez in the seventh round

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

79. CESAR **CANCHILA** Junior Flyweight 27-1 (21)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Came from out of nowhere—"nowhere" being Colombia, where his first 27 fights all came against unknowns—to surprise undefeated powerpuncher Giovanni Segura by unanimous decision and capture an interim title in July. Rose from a second-round knockdown and showed plenty of skill and toughness to win in his American debut.
Future: There's talk of a possible fight in Macau against Brian Viloria on December 13. That would be a solid chance for the Colombian to prove he's legit.

80. RAUL **GARCIA** IBF Minimumweight Titleholder 24-0-1 (15)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: "Rayito" was quietly doing solid work in Mexico before enjoying a breakout year (at least by strawweight standards) in 2008 with three quality 12-round decision wins in a row. Handled fringe contender Ronald Barrera in an IBF eliminator in February, snagged IBF belt from heavy-handed Florante Condes in June, and made one-sided first defense over Jose Luis Varela in September.
Future: As long as all of the top 105-pounders are from different parts of the globe and haven't been on U.S. television at all, there isn't a money fight out there. Maybe a showdown with Roman Gonzalez will make sense if they both stay unbeaten for another year or so.

81. DAVID **DIAZ**
Lightweight 34-2-1 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: 73
Status Report: Chicago veteran is the definition of an "honest" fighter—both because of his no-nonsense fighting style and his hilarious postfight interviews. Had his modest talent exposed in brutal ninth-round kayo loss to pound-for-pound king Manny Pacquiao in June, costing Diaz his alphabet belt, but at least got paid well for the punishment. Before that, looked so-so winning a non-title tune-up against Ramon Montano in March. All in all, a forgettable title reign, but a nice late-bloomer story.
Future: Entertaining fighter fits in nicely in deep 135 class, just not against the elite.

Diaz mixes it up with Montano
PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

82. JORGE **ARCE** Junior Bantamweight 50-4-1 (38)

Last Year's Ranking: 51
Status Report: You know that old saying about how top fighters get more exciting as they get older? Well, Arce was already pretty darned exciting, but now that his abilities are fading fast, every fight is a war. Used a dramatic bodyshot kayo to pull out a comeback win against Tomas Rojas (KO 6), splattered Medgoen Singsurat in 47 seconds, eked one out against Devid Lookmahanak (W 12), and prevailed in a Fight of the Year contender against Rafael Concepcion (KO 9).
Future: Had November bout against Isidro Garcia scheduled, then maybe a spring fight as a heavy underdog against Nonito Donaire.

83. LORENZO **PARRA** Junior Featherweight 29-2 (18)

Last Year's Ranking: 59
Status Report: Can't be found in the current RING ratings because he's been division hopping, but in a pound-for-pound sense, former flyweight titlist still good enough to crack the top 100. In his one significant fight in the last 12 months, made a huge leap to 122 pounds to challenge excellent Celestino Caballero and suffered a TKO at the start of the 12th due to a broken jaw. Had easy fights before and after that one, against Benjamin Rivas (KO 2) and Eduardo Pacheco (W 10).
Future: Needs to figure out which weight class he belongs in, and our guess is it's bantamweight.

84. JEAN-MARC **MORMECK** Cruiserweight 33-4 (22)

Last Year's Ranking: 48
Status Report: Two-time former RING world champion once looked a sturdy sort, but punch resistance is actually turning out to be a liability. Second reign ended last November via exciting seventh-round kayo against David Haye, and 36-year-old Frenchman hasn't fought since. A match with Steve Cunningham was discussed, but couldn't be made.
Future: If he doesn't get busy and get back to winning soon, this could be the last of a seven-year run in THE RING 100. Here's a decent match: Mormeck-Firat Arslan in a battle of bodybuilders.

85. ANDREAS **KOTELNIK**
WBA Super Lightweight Titleholder 30-2-1 (13)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Germany-based Ukrainian hadn't done much of note—decision losses to Junior Witter and Souleymane Mbaye and a rematch draw against Mbaye—before surprising unbeaten Gavin Rees (KO 12) in Wales to claim WBA strap in March. Made easy first defense six months later in Ukraine against Japanese import Norio Kimura (W 12).
Future: Was supposed to face Dmitriy Salita at Madison Square Garden on Joe Calzaghe-Roy Jones undercard, but had to withdraw with a rib injury. The fight, which looks like a good matchup for Kotelnik, could still happen next year.

Kotelnik batters Rees to take alphabet title
PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

86. RUSLAN **CHAGAEV**
WBA Heavyweight Titleholder 24-0-1 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: 89
Status Report: Lefthanded Uzbeki heavyweight emerged this year as the heir apparent to Vitali Klitschko's crown as the most injury-prone fighter in the division. With all of the illnesses, injuries, postponements, and cancellations, Chagaev fought only once in the past year, a comfortable decision over unworthy challenger Matt Skelton. After his latest—and most serious—ailment, a torn Achilles tendon, was dubbed "champion in recess" by the overanxious WBA and had to watch two men he defeated, Nicolay Valuev and John Ruiz, fight for the vacant title.

Chagaev rip Skelton with an uppercut

PHOTO BY MICHAEL GOTTSCHALK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Future: Has plenty of potential in a weak heavyweight division, but none of that matters until he gets healthy.

87. WLADIMIR **SIDORENKO** Bantamweight 21-1-2 (7)

Last Year's Ranking: 90
Status Report: It's hard to know whether to penalize him at all for first career loss because the man he lost to in May, Anselmo Moreno, might just prove to be something special, and it was a competitive points loss. Before that, made his sixth successful defense of the WBA 118-pound title, easily turning back Nobuto Ikehara (W 12) in Japan. Not much of a puncher, as kayo rate indicates, but a technically sound boxer.
Future: A Germany-based Ukrainian in a division full of Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans, there aren't many obvious opportunities.

88. HERMAN **NGOUDJO** Junior Welterweight 17-2 (9)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: The reigning king of close decisions, "The Black Panther" added two more to his resume in the past year, an IBF title try against Paulie Malignaggi (L 12) that could have gone either way and a tight title eliminator against Souleymane Mbaye (W 12). In '07, suffered a split decision loss to Jose Luis Castillo and a split decision win over Randall Bailey, both of which—you guessed it—could have just as easily gone the other way. The key for Canada-based Cameroonian: Keep fighting in Quebec, where he's undefeated.
Future: Will likely face Juan Urango for vacant IBF belt. Sounds like a close distance fight to us.

89. EDGAR **SOSA**
WBC Light Flyweight Titleholder 33-5 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: 96
Status Report: Busy beltholder tallied four defenses in the past year, all fairly convincing, but all against modest opposition. Victims included used-up former 105-pound titlist Roberto Leyva (KO 4), Jesus Iribe (W 12), Takashi Kunishige (KO 8), and Sonny Boy Jaro (W 12). Jaro fight included a brief scare, with Sosa suffering a ninth-round knockdown, but was otherwise one-sided.
Future: Mandatory against solid veteran Juanito Rubillar will be due soon. Rubillar is coming off an impressive upset win over Omar Nino in June.

Sosa continues his winning ways against Kunishige

PHOTO BY RONALDO SCHEMIDT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

90. SILENCE **MABUZA** Bantamweight 22-2 (18)

Last Year's Ranking: 98
Status Report: Best bantamweight of recent times never to hold a major title, South African scored a pair of good wins this year. Knocked down Eden Sonsona at the end of round eight in February and the Filipino didn't come out for round nine, then TKO'd normally durable Argentine Damian David Marchiano (KO 5), who'd gone the distance with Abner Mares just a couple of fights earlier. Only two losses are against Rafael Marquez in '05 and '06.
Future: Now 31 years old and overdue for another shot at one of the division's best. How about Mabuza vs. Joseph Agbeko in an all-African showdown?

91. ADRIAN **DIACONU** WBC Light Heavyweight Titleholder 25-0 (15)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: "The Shark" generally attacks with an aggressiveness worthy of his nickname, but in lone fight in the past 12 months, had to mix up his attack and even go on the defensive at times to get past fellow unbeaten Chris Henry. Ultimately, Montreal-based fighter pulled out a close unanimous decision in his native Romania to claim the interim WBC belt, which became the full title a few months later when Chad Dawson was stripped for fighting Antonio Tarver.
Future: Was set to face 42-year-old Silvio Branco in first defense, which will have happened by the time this magazine hits newsstands.

92. JOSEPH **AGBEKO**
IBF Bantamweight Titleholder 25-1 (22)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: This "King Kong" can't be found atop the Empire State Building. In fact, he can't be found anywhere at all these days. Made a big splash by demolishing respected Luis Perez (KO 7) for the IBF 118-pound belt in September '07, but apparently hasn't been promoter Don King's top priority since, as he's been on the shelf for more than a year. Bronx-based Ghanaian has been scheduled to make mandatory against William Gonzalez a couple of times, but it just keeps getting postponed.
Future: Still expected to fight Gonzalez, hopefully sometime soon.

Agbeko connects with a flush right against Perez

PHOTO BY DAVID MARTIN-WARR/DKP/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

93. ANTONIO **PITALUA** Lightweight 46-3 (40)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Mexico-based Colombian wasn't anywhere near The Ring 100 radar screen until September '08, when he stunned "uncrowned champion" Jose Armando Santa Cruz via sixth-round knockout. Biggest victory on 38-year-old's record prior to that was probably a 1999 points win over Cosme Rivera.
Future: Expected to face puncher Edwin Valero for an interim alphabet belt sometime in '09. Conventional wisdom says this is Pitalua's first and last year in these rankings.

94. LIBRADO **ANDRADE**
Super Middleweight 27-1 (21)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Rock-jawed brawler bounced back nicely from his first career defeat (against Mikkel Kessler in his lone title shot), rising from a shocking knockdown to pummel Yusaf Mack (KO 7) last October and beating up outgunned German Robert Stieglitz (KO 8) in March. Definitely somewhat limited, but a solid TV attraction who's never in a bad fight.
Future: Second shot at a belt, scheduled for just after our press deadline, looked like another toughie, against unbeaten Lucian Bute in Montreal.

Andrade slugs his way to TKO of Stieglitz

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

95. JORGE **SOLIS** Featherweight 36-1-2 (26) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Older brother of 108-pound beltholder Ulises Solis is a solid contender himself, his only loss coming against Manny Pacquiao in an April '07 junior lightweight fight. Has scored three straight wins since, including victories over credible Miguel Roman (W 10) and Jorge Samudio (KO 4).
Future: Samudio fight was a 130-pound alphabet title eliminator, furthering the question in which division Solis ought to campaign. He's been bouncing between feather and junior light for the last five years.

96. DENKAOSAN **KAOVICHIT** Flyweight 44-1-1 (18)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Having faced a steady diet of nobodies since sole career loss to Eric Morel in 2002, bounced back onto the contender map in November '07 with 12-round draw against beltholder Takefumi Sakata on the titlist's home turf. Has since returned to his busy pace, fighting four times in '08—but all four opponents had losing records and three of the fights were only six-rounders.
Future: At age 32, can't just keep marking time. Deserves a rematch with Sakata, or how about an all-Thai fight against Pongsaklek Wonjongkam?

97. KENDALL **HOLT**
Junior Welterweight 24-2 (13)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Probably the sport's most wildly inconsistent fighter in terms of entertainment value, "Rated R" won an absolute stinker against Ben Tackie in February (W 10), then prevailed in a 61-second firefight against Ricardo Torres (KO 1) in July. Athletic but chinny Holt was dropped twice in the opening minute before rallying to crush Torres along the ropes—with a little help from an accidental headbutt.
Future: Having also lost a controversial fight to Torres in '07, there's a rubber match, schelduled for December 13 on Showtime.

Ref pulls Holt away from Torres

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

98. NICOLAY **VALUEV** WBA Heavyweight Titleholder 49-1 (34) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Luckily for the seven-foot, 318-pounder, we don't take the term "pound-for-pound" literally when discussing heavyweights, because for a guy who outweighs Wladimir Klitschko by 75 pounds, he isn't all that good. But Russian giant is a tough out for anyone, thanks in part to a scary jab and a hard-to-reach chin, and he performed well in decision wins in the past year against Jean-Francois Bergeron, Sergei Liakhovich, and John Ruiz.
Future: A rematch with the only man to beat him (and the WBA's "champion in recess"), Ruslan Chagaev, is possible in early-'09, as is unification against Klitschko.

99. RICARDO **TORRES** Junior Welterweight 32-2 (28)

Last Year's Ranking: not rated
Status Report: Sort of an odd entry in The Ring 100, since he had only one fight since last year's edition's deadline and lost it in the first round, but if Kendall Holt is in here, Torres shouldn't be far behind. Colombian had Holt on the canvas twice in the first 35 seconds of July fight, but was the victim of an unintentional butt that softened him up for a lights-out right hand. Prior to that, beat Holt in September '07 by controversial 11th-round stoppage.
Future: "Mochuelo" can punch, and he'll get another chance to show it against Holt on December 13 in Atlantic City.

100. JEFF **LACY**
Super Middleweight 24-1 (17) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 84
Status Report: Once considered the future of the super middleweight division, "Left Hook" has dropped off badly since losing to Joe Calzaghe. His tendency since has been to win ugly, with a pair of close 10-round decisions in the past year against underdogs Peter Manfredo and Epifanio Mendoza. Hard to say if Calzaghe beating damaged him or if injuries have been the main culprit, but either way, he just hasn't been the same.
Future: Looked like the 'dog going into November bout against Jermain Taylor, but it would put him right back on track if he won battle of former Olympic teammates.

Lacy hooks Manfredo

PHOTO BY GABRIEL BOUYS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

[Summary]

Heavyweights
Vitali Klitschko KO 8 Samuel Peter
(Regains WBC Title)
Juan Carlos Gomez W 12 Vladimir Virchis
Edgar Kalnars W 10 Franklin Egobi
Odlanier Solis KO 9 Chauncy Welliver
Chris Arreola KO 3 Israel Garcia
Gonzalo Basile W 12 Raphael Zumbano
Shane Cameron W 12 Terry Smith
Eddie Chambers KO 5 Livin Castillo
Dominick Guinn KO 2 Jean Francois Bergeron

Cruiserweights
Giacobbe Fragomeni Tech. Win 8 Rudolf Kraj
(Wins WBC Title)
Guillermo Jones KO 10 Firat Arslan
(Wins WBA Title)
Marco Huck KO 2 Fabio Tuiach
Vadim Tokarev KO 3 Chris Thomas
Robert Norton W 12 Micky Steeds
Ali Ismailov W 10 Max Alexander
Alexander Alexeev KO 3 Rob Calloway
Marcus Oliveria KO 3 Kelvin Davis
Vitaliy Rusal KO 1 Mihaly Nemet

Light Heavyweights
Chad Dawson W 12 Antonio Tarver
(Wins IBF Title)
Bernard Hopkins W 12 Kelly Pavlik
Mariano Plotinsky W 10 Mariano Strunz
Vasily Lepikhin W 10 Rudolf Asaturyan
J.J. Ojuederie W 10 Joey Vegas
Sebastian Wille W 10 Steve Kroekel
Tim Bell KO 8 Daniel Lovett
Gregory Soszynski KO 8 Jiri Svacina
Danny McIntosh KO 7 Steven Spartacus
Yusaf Mack KO 6 Omar Pittman

Super Middleweights
Lucian Bute W 12 Librado Andrade
(Retains IBF Title)
Mikkel Kessler KO 3 Danilo Haussler
(Retains WBA Title)
Jean Paul Mendy W 12 Jason Naugler
Denis Inkin W 12 Fulgencio Zuniga
Tarvis Simms W 10 Delray Raines
Henry Porras W 10 Jose Corral
Anthony Dirrell W 4 Andy Mavros
Mariano Carrera KO 3 Jose Santos
Daniel Jacobs KO 1 Tyrone Watson

Middleweights
Marco Antonio Rubio W 12 Enrique Ornelas
David Lopez W 12 Samuel Miller
Paul Williams KO 1 Andy Kolle
Howard Eastman W 12 Andrew Lewis
Renan St. Juste W 10 Amilcar Melian
Sergey Melis W 10 Jurijs Boreiko
Avtandil Khurtsidze W 12 Valentin Ochoa
Gennady Martirosyan W 10 Attila Kovacs
Maksim Bursak KO 8 Esteban Ponce
Pawel Wolak KO 3 Chad Greenleaf
Fernando Guerrero W 8 Tyrone Watson

Junior Middleweights
Shane Mosley KO 12 Ricardo Mayorga
Luis Collazo KO 8 Russell Jordan
Sergio Martinez KO 8 Alex Bunema
Carlos Quintana KO 4 Joshua Onyango
Ronald Hearns KO 6 Paul Clavette
Demetrius Andrade KO 2 Patrick Cape
Yuri Foreman W 10 Vinroy Barrett
Adriano Cardarello W 10 Ignacio Fraga
Kassim Ouma KO 6 Martinus Clay
Alfredo Angulo KO 10 Andrey Tsurkan
Holly Holm D 10 Mary Jo Sanders

Welterweights
Andre Berto W 12 Steve Forbes
(Retains WBC Title)
Jorge Miranda W 12 Victor Purreta
Saul Alvarez W 10 Larry Mosley
Stefan Stevanovic W 10 Michael Schubov
Norberto Gonzalez W 10 Antonio Arras
Irving Garcia W 10 Chris Smith
Omar Weis KO 8 Oscar Medina
Ricardo Williams Jr. W 8 Dairo Esalas
Jackson Bonsu W 6 Gheorghe Danut
Dennis Laurente KO 6 Arturo Urena
Mike Alvarado KO 4 Manuel Garnica
Danny Garcia KO 3 Deon Nash

Junior Welterweights
Kaiser Mabuza W 12 Samuel Malinga
Alex De Jesus KO 8 Jose Izquierdo
Randall Bailey W 8 DeMarcus Corley
Reyes Sanchez KO 7 Ali Chebah
Somchai Nakbalee KO 6 Lance Gostelow
Sergey Fedchenko KO 4 Juan Godoy
Mike Alvarado KO 4 Manuel Garnica
Hector Sanchez KO 2 Albert Rodriguez

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Junior middleweight Ronald Hearns bashes a right on the side of Paul Clavette's head

Lightweights

Carlos Urias W 12 Cristian Lopez
Enrique Colin W 12 Gerardo Zayas
Verquan Kimbrough D 10 Michael Clark
Brandon Rios D 10 Manuel Perez
Tyrone Harris KO 9 Damian Fuller
Kiyotaka Kanamaru Tech. Win 9 Akira Yamazaki
Vicente Escobedo KO 6 Dominic Salcido
Jonathan Thaxton KO 3 Juan Melero

Junior Lightweights

Humberto Soto KO 10 Gamaliel Diaz
(Wins Vacant WBC Title)
Jasper Seroka W 12 Godfrey Nzimande
Humberto Gutierrez W 10 Guadalupe Rosales
Sergey Gulyakevich W 10 Beka Sadjaia
David Rodela W 8 Kevin Kelley
Yuriorkis Gamboa KO 2 Marcos Ramirez
Ricky Burns W 12 Osumanu Akaba
Katsuya Kobayashi KO 4 Yuya Miyagi

Featherweights

Chris John W 12 Hiroyuki Enoki
(Retains WBA Title)
Cristobal Cruz W 12 Orlando Salido
(Wins Vacant IBF Title)
Oscar Larios W 12 Takahiro Aoh
(Wins Vacant WBC Title)
Steven Luevano W 12 Billy Dib
Manelisi Mbilase W 12 Thando Vukuza
Satoshi Hosono W 12 Makyo Sugita
Jonathan Oquendo W 10 Jose Beranza
Terdsak Jandaeng KO 5 Eric Macas
Cristian Lopez W 12 Ricardo Castillo
Bernabe Concepcion KO 8 Giovanni Caro
Naoki Matsuda KO 5 Masaki Sawanaga
Azael Gonzalez KO 3 Francisco Valdez

Junior Featherweights

Jorge Lacierva W 12 Feider Viloria
Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym W 11 Jonel Alivio
Sergio Manuel Medina KO 11 Jean Sotelo
Juan Manuel Lopez KO 1 Cesar Figueroa
Joichiro Tatsuyoshi KO 2 Phalangchai Chuwatana
Satoshi Makino KO 10 Sakai Jockygym
Jorge Cardenas W 10 Carlos Medellin
Antonio Escalante KO 3 Mike Oliver
Ramie Laput KO 3 Mongkolchai Singmanasak
Nestor Rocha KO 2 Javier Cintron
Rico Ramos KO 1 Manuel Sarabia

Bantamweights

Hozumi Hasegawa KO 2 Alejandro Valdez
(Retains WBC Title)
Ian Napa W 12 Carmelo Ballone
Francisco Paredes W 12 Ramon Leyte
Sasha Bakhtin W 10 Gerson Guerrero
Vincent Palicte W 10 Celso Danggod
Daniel Iannazzo W 10 Narongchai Kiatpaiboon
Takuya Kogawa W 10 Richard Olisa
Diego Silva W 10 Diego Loto

Junior Bantamweights

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam KO 6 Mohammed Akbar
Timur Shailezov W 12 Azizbek Kalmamatov
Julio Cesar Miranda KO 7 Eduardo Garcia
Jose Lopez KO 7 Jonathan Perez
Juan Montes KO 6 Regulo Gamez
Ricardo Nunez KO 6 Adolfo Ramos
Irma Sanchez W 12 Lucia Avalos

Flyweights

Denkaosan Kaovichit KO 2 Dennis Juntillano
Brian Viloria W 8 Juan Lagos
Myung Ho Lee W 10 Taiji Hashimoto
Takashi Kunishige W 10 Yuji Kanemitsu
Rocky Fuentes KO 8 Louie Bantigue
Jin-Man Jun W 12 Saensaknoi Or Muangklang
Fernando Lumacad D 12 Saensaknoi Or Muangklang
Richard Garcia W 11 Ratanapol Sor Vorapin
Mariana Juarez W 10 Suzannah Warner
Omar Soto KO 3 Jorge Romero

Junior Flyweights

Edgar Sosa W 12 Sonny Boy Jaro
(Retains WBC Title)
Omar Nino W 10 Francisco Soto
Adrian Hernandez W 10 Ivan Meneses
Jether Oliva KO 5 Jerome Buntog
Jhonreil Casimero KO 5 Liempetch Sor Veerapol
Noknoi Sitthiprasert KO 4 Agus Situmorang

Strawweights

Oleydong Sithsamerchai KO 4 John Siregar
Daniel Reyes W 12 Luis Lazarte
Pigmy Muangchaiyaphum W 12 Johan Wahyudi
Mating Kilakil KO 2 Julius Agcopra

Roman Gonzalez KO 4 Yutaka Niida

Yokohama, Japan: Nicaraguan kayo artist "Chocolate" Gonzalez, 104½, captured the WBA 105-pound belt by stalking defending titlist Niida, 104¼, Japan, from the outset and closing his right eye so completely that the referee declared a halt at 1:59 of the fourth round. The 21-year-old Gonzalez' awesome performance at Pacifico Yokohama was reminiscent of feather champ Alexis Arguello's annihilation of Royal Kobayashi in Tokyo in 1975. Gonzalez displayed his remarkable powerpunching from the start and maintained the pressure on the elusive but less powerful titleholder.

The pugnacious Gonzalez had the upper hand in the first three rounds, as all three officials—John Poturaj (USA), Sergio Caiz (USA), and Pinit Prayadsab (Thailand)—tallied 10-9 for him in every round. Niida, 29 and making his eighth defense, attempted retaliations with triple left uppercuts, but Gonzalez shrugged them off and responded with more explosive triple lefts to the face.

Gonzalez' furious combinations had the beltholder bleeding from the nostrils and his right eye badly swollen and almost closed. In round four, Niida was reeling from the proverbial pillar to post, when referee Mark Nelson (USA) stopped the proceedings and had the damaged optic examined by the doctor.

Nelson coolly stopped the affair then and there despite some displeasure from Niida's supporters. But had it continued, Niida, 23-2-3 (9), would certainly have hit the deck in the 61-second remainder of the fourth session.

The jubilant Gonzalez, 21-0 (19), burst into tears of joy as he rode on his cornerman's shoulders. "I'm very happy and excited to win the world belt here in Japan," he said. "I dedicate this coronation to the Nicaraguan people."

Gonzalez used to be called "Chocolatito" (small chocolate), but he insisted after this bout that he should be called "Chocolate" (apparently no longer thinking of himself as small). The Nicaraguan sensation's future seems very bright, and he may have the potential to become as successful in the lower weight classes as Michael Carbajal or Ricardo Lopez. He fights just like Arguello, with good balance and devastating punching.

Promoter: **Akihiko Honda's Teiken Promotions**

(9-15-08)

Joe Koizumi

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/GETTY IMAGES

Undefeated Gonzalez drills Niida with a right

Nobuo Nashiro W 12 Kohei Kono

Yokohama, Japan: Former WBA super flyweight titlist Nashiro, 115, Japan, barely regained his old belt—or at least one version of it—by eking out a hairline split decision over compatriot Kono, 115, over a hard-fought 12 at Pacifico Yokohama. Judges John Poturaj (USA) and Takeo Harada (Japan) both saw it 115-114 both for Nashiro, while Takeshi Shimakawa (Japan) had it 115-114 in favor of Kono. THE RING tallied 115-113 for the more accurate and effective Nashiro.

It was one of those fights where nearly every round was difficult to score. As it turned out, there were only three rounds (the second, fifth, and 10th) that all three judges agreed on. The challenge in scoring this fight arose because Kono threw twice as many punches as Nashiro, but they were mostly inaccurate, pitty-pat shots, and while Nashiro threw one punch at a time, they were more effective.

Kono opened the fight as the aggressor, and the shorter Nashiro responded with solid single punches. Nashiro, who had upset Martin Castillo to win the WBA belt in his eighth pro bout before losing it to Alexander Munoz in his second

defense, occasionally connected with left hooks in the second and third. Kono continued doing a reasonable impression of Fighting Harada's busy style, only with much less accuracy than Harada.

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/GETTY IMAGES

Nashiro finds Kono's face with a right uppercut

Kono, 27, looked in command in the fourth through sixth sessions with his sheer volume of busy combos. But Nashiro, 26, appeared to win the majority of the rounds after that. Kono, 21-4 (7), remained energetic and vigorous in the second half of the fight, but kept missing the target repeatedly, while Nashiro, 12-1 (7), sometimes connected with single shots, but couldn't follow up well enough to clearly dominate the rounds. They left the judges with a difficult job, and the same went for referee Pinit Prayadsab (Thailand), who had to deal with many head clashes and clinches.

With Cristian Mijares recognized by the WBA as "super champion," Nashiro claimed the vacant "regular" title in this bout. However, on the same day, in Mexico, Jorge Arce topped Rafael Concepcion for the "interim" title. So Nashiro has just one of three WBA titles at the weight. It is expected that he and Arce will fight to "unify" two of them.

Promoter: **Akihiko Honda's Teiken Promotions**

(9-15-08)

Joe Koizumi

[The Ring Fighter of the Month]

Bernard Hopkins

At the conclusion of Bernard Hopkins' stunning whitewash of Kelly Pavlik, a man 17 years his junior, much of the ringside press in Atlantic City was speechless. And those who could speak were mostly reduced to one-word responses to what they'd just witnessed. "Amazing." "Incredible." "Unbelievable." And the most common, and probably most fitting, one of all: "Wow!"

Regardless of age, for a fighter to do what Hopkins did to someone as highly regarded as the previously unbeaten Pavlik should go down in history as an all-time great performance. Hopkins was almost unhittable, never let Pavlik get comfortable, landed square on the target with half of his powerpunches, and with the fight in the bag heading into the final round, did everything in his power to push for the knockout. It was a breathtaking display of boxing genius. Add in the fact that it was a 43-year-old doing it, and it becomes an all-time legendary athletic achievement.

If ever there was a pugilistic performance that made you want to bow down at the feet of a fighter, this was it. So, Bernard, maybe a one-word response isn't the way to go. Maybe we should go with three words instead: We're not worthy.

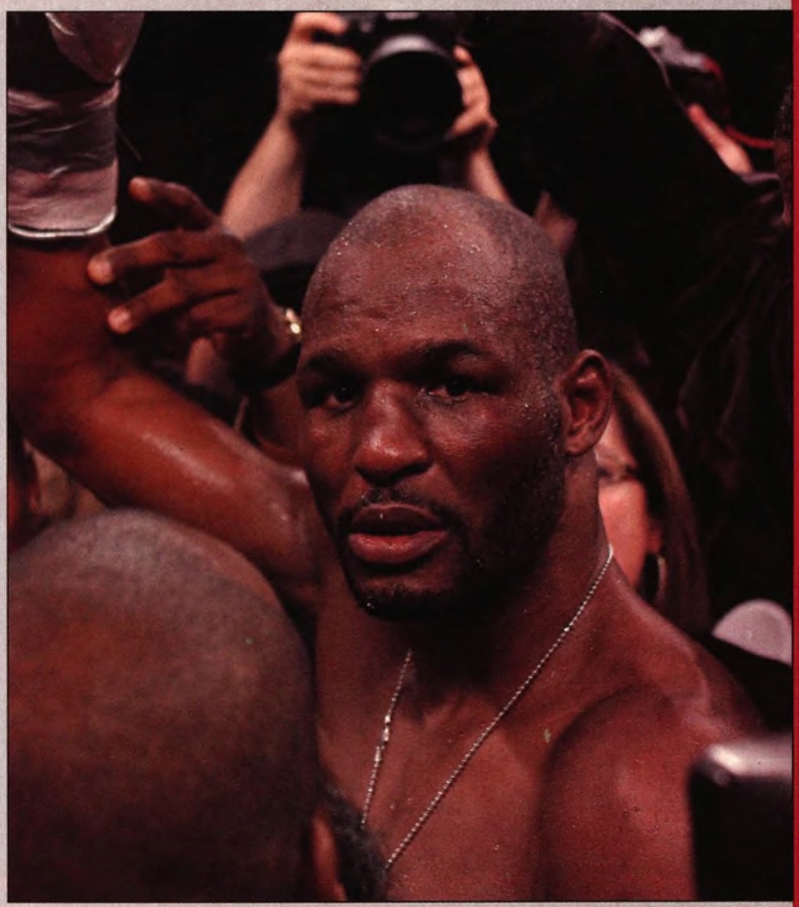


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Juan Manuel Lopez KO 1 Cesar Figueroa

Hato Rey, Puerto Rico: If you thought junior featherweight sensation Lopez couldn't possibly top his 2-minute, 25-second destruction of Daniel Ponce De Leon to claim the WBO 122-pound title in June, he proved otherwise by obliterating the usually competent Figueroa in only 47 seconds in his first title defense. Although many regard the 25-year-old Puerto Rican southpaw as a better boxer than puncher, he's changing that image by ringing up one highlight reel knockout after another—and it doesn't get much prettier than the two-punch combination that took out the 30-year-old Mexican Figueroa.

For about the first 35 seconds at Coliseo Jose Miguel Agrelot, there wasn't much happening. Lopez, 121, and Figueroa, 121½, simply circled each other and pawed with measuring punches. But that was apparently all the setup Lopez needed. He unleashed a sudden straight left that landed flush, and followed in rhythm with a right hook to the point of the chin, planting the Mexican on the canvas face-first. Figueroa, 30-7-2 (22), got to his knees at Puerto Rican referee Roberto Ramirez' count of five, but couldn't get any closer to his feet than that and was counted out.

Now 23-0 (21), Lopez appears ready for the division's best, but he needs more exposure first if he's going to lure a bigger name like Israel Vazquez or Rafael Marquez into the ring. He'll get some of that exposure on December 6, when he fights on the pay-per-view undercard of the Oscar De La Hoya-Manny Pacquiao superfight.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoters: **PR Best Boxing, Top Rank**
(10-4-08)

Andre Berto W 12 Stevie Forbes

Carson, California: Forbes has lately made his living fighting bigger men, a particularly hazardous occupation for a competitor who lacks punching power and refuses to run. Because the heavily favored, undefeated Berto, 25, has both power and speed, the experienced Forbes, 31, really had his hands full this time.

Berto, 145½, Winter Haven, Florida, learned the hard way that Forbes, 147, Las Vegas, Nevada, lives by the counterpunch, but, as Forbes said later, Berto was too sharp to let him have the distance he needed to control his aggressive opponent. Berto, defending the WBC welterweight title for the first time, seemed angered in the early rounds by shots he just didn't expect, but he kept up a steady flow of well-placed punches, mixing them up and slowly taking over. There were no knockdowns, and neither man was ever in serious trouble. Forbes was cut on the outside corner of his left eye by a clash of heads in round three, but it never became a factor. Toward the later rounds, much of the fighting was in close. Referee James Jen-Kin (USA) often instructed them to work out of clinches themselves, and they mostly did.

Judges Steve Morrow (USA) and Nobuaki Uratani (Japan) scored it 118-109. Jose Cobian (USA) saw it 116-111, as did THE RING.

Berto, 23-0 (19), is being moved up at a logical pace, but he competes in a welterweight division that is second to none in terms of talent. Not only does it include Antonio Margarito, Paul Williams, and Miguel Cotto, but also dangerous contenders like Joshua Clottey and Shane Mosley, who kayoed Ricardo Mayorga in the main event at The Home Depot Center. Berto can't call himself a "champion" and avoid all of them. His promoter, Lou DiBella, called Berto a "work in progress," which is not the kind of language promoters use when they're looking to challenge a Margarito.

"This guy can really punch," said Forbes, 33-7 (9), afterward, adding that Berto has "good boxing skills" as well. Forbes, well known to fans as an alumnus of *The Contender* TV show, is managed by Jeff Wald, the show's executive producer. Wald said his fighter would definitely head back to the junior welter division.

Promoters: **Golden Boy Promotions, DiBella Entertainment**
Television: **HBO**
(9-27-08)
Ivan Goldman

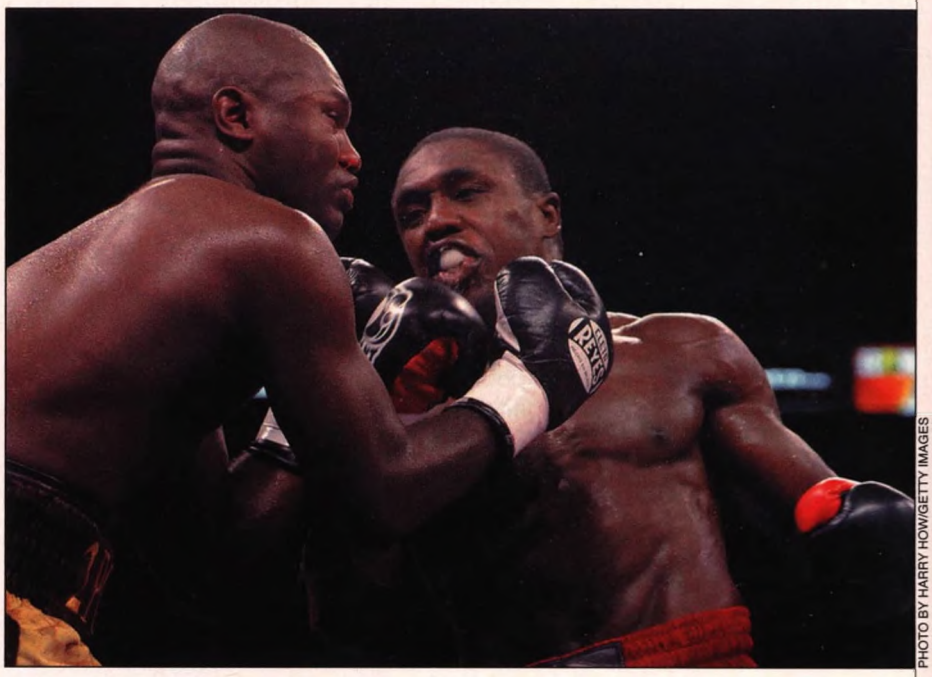


PHOTO BY HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

Berto was too big and too powerful for Forbes

Celestino Caballero KO 1 Elvis Mejia

Panama City, Panama: With a major Showtime-televised alphabet unification bout against Steve Molitor in the offing, Caballero and his handlers were taking no chances for his tuneup fight on the WBA's annual "KO Drugs" card, pairing him against Mejia, a 43-year-old who'd been knocked out in all seven of his previous losses, five times in the first four rounds. As expected, the talented Panamanian made it eight kayo defeats, pummeling Mejia until referee Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico) stopped it at 2:51 of the opening round.

About 90 seconds into the fight at the Centro de Convenciones Figaly, Caballero, 122, caught the Colombian with a sweeping right-left combination, dropping him to canvas. Mejia popped up quickly and, after taking the eight-count, got on his bike for a few moments. Making his fifth defense of the WBA super bantamweight title, Caballero, 32, kept the pressure on, and Mejia attempted to hold his ground and tossed a couple of two-punch combinations that fell short. Caballero's response offerings did not fall short. Two jabs and a right hand landed along the ropes, then a right uppercut scored in the corner.

Mejia, 27-8-1 (7), kept bouncing from one side of the ring to the other, taking punishment. A big straight right hand landed for the titleholder. Then a left-right to the body connected. Mejia gamely hung in there, but he had nothing with which to hold off Caballero. Two perfectly delivered one-two combinations scored for the local man along the ropes, and Mejia sagged just a bit, which was all that ref Pabon needed to see to stop the fight at just the right moment.

Caballero, 30-2 (21), immediately dropped down and kissed the canvas. That was the only way Mejia was ever going to get Caballero on the mat.

Promoter: **Promociones y Eventos del Istm**

(9-18-08)

Anselmo Moreno Tech. Win 7 Cecilio Santos

Panama City, Panama: Fighting on the same "KO Drugs" show at the Centro de Convenciones Figaly that featured Panama's Celestino Caballero defeating Elvis Mejia, countryman Moreno did a decent Caballero impression in making his first successful defense of the WBA bantamweight title. "Chemito" doesn't punch as hard as Caballero, and he's a southpaw whereas Caballero fights out of the orthodox stance, but with his lanky physique and technical proficiency, it's hard not to think of him as a younger version of the man who wears the same organization's belt four pounds to the north. On this night, however, Moreno was in with a much better challenger than was Caballero, and had to settle for a technical decision win rather than an explosive knockout.

Santos, 117, Mexico City, Mexico, was coming off a 12-round draw against Dimitri Kirilov for the IBF

PHOTO BY SKY GILBAR/GETTY IMAGES

Caballero tunes up for Molitor with easy kayo of Mejia

115-pound belt, which gives an indication of his ability to compete at a world-class level. But he was unable to compete with the 23-year-old Moreno, 118. The 5'2" Santos was rarely able to get into close range against the 5'8" Moreno, who just kept landing his long right jab and straight left hand round after round. When Santos, 22-9-3 (12), did get inside, Moreno was frequently waiting for him with lefts to the body and crisp uppercuts.

The fight was easy to score and featured few moments of drama, at least until the final minute of round seven, when Moreno led with his head and cracked skulls with the 30-year-old Santos, opening a cut over the challenger's right eye. Referee Roberto Ramirez (Puerto Rico) called in the ringside doctor, and at 2:13 of the round, the fight was stopped. It went to the cards with the partial seventh round being scored, and all three judges, Manuel Rodriguez (Colombia), Enrique Portocarrrero (Nicaragua), and Dr. Ruben Garcia (USA), had it 70-63 in favor of Moreno.

Moreno, 23-1-1 (8), was scheduled to return to the ring for his second defense just six weeks later, taking on Rolly Matsushita of the Philippines.

Promoter: **Promociones y Eventos del Istm**

(9-18-08)

Juan Carlos Gomez W 12
Vladimir Virchis

Hamburg, Germany: It has been four years since Gomez suffered a first-round knockout loss against fellow transplanted Cuban Yanqui Diaz in Laredo, Texas, and it remains the former WBC cruiserweight titleholder's only defeat. At the Color Line Arena, he was simply too quick and too clever for Virchis, 240¼, Kiev, Ukraine, and his victory by unanimous decision elevated him into the mandatory challenger's position for the WBC heavyweight title held by another Ukrainian, Vitali Klitschko.

Virchis, 24-2 (20), was ranked number one by the WBC coming into the bout and had only lost previously to Ruslan Chagaev via majority decision, but Gomez, 233¾, Hamburg, Germany, via La Haban, Cuba, who was ranked number two, was in charge from the outset, establishing his southpaw jab early and out-thinking and outworking his fellow 35-year-old. Virchis needed to pin Gomez against the ropes to unload the kind of punches that might have swung the fight his way, but he was way behind on points by the time he showed a hint of urgency.

Having swept the opening three rounds with fast and accurate combinations, Gomez, 44-1 (35) with 1 no-contest, floored Virchis with a left hook to the jaw in round four. The Ukrainian was not seriously hurt, and when British

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Gomez pounds Virchis en route to decision victory

referee Ian John-Lewis completed the mandatory eight-count, Virchis tried to get into the fight immediately, but he proved to be as ineffectual as before. The action heated up in the sixth and Virchis had some success, but it was transient, with Gomez landing a succession of hard shots to the head and body before the round was over.

Gomez continued to control the fight until round 10 when, finally, Virchis was able to apply sustained pressure and penetrate Gomez' guard with hard shots to the head. His right hand found the target several times before Gomez was able to get out of harm's way. With a little more effort, Virchis might even have been on the verge of a result-altering attack. But he was unable to land the decisive blow, and, although Gomez was penalized a point for punching low in round 11, the former cruiser king was never in trouble again. In fact, he put together a steady assault in the penultimate round and also in the final round, when Virchis tried desperately to land a big punch but failed. Some right hands got through, but not with enough impact to secure the stoppage he required.

Judge Guido Cavalleri (Italy) scored 117-110, Alejandro Rochin Mapula (Mexico) 117-109, and Sergio Silvi (Luxembourg) 115-111, all for Gomez. THE RING scored 117-110 for Gomez. The WBC insisted that new titleholder Klitschko should face Gomez within 90 days of his win over Samuel Peter.

Promoter: **Universum-Box**
(9-27-08)
Brian Doogan

Guillermo Jones KO 10 Firat Arslan

Hamburg, Germany: Having produced a dominating performance from the first round of the fight, Jones, 200, Colon, Panama, finished with a flourish to secure the WBA cruiserweight title with a 10th-round stoppage of Arslan, 198¾, Suessen, Germany, at the Color Line Arena. It was Arslan's second title defense.

Arslan's credentials had always been open to question, for he won his belt against a 43-year-old Virgil Hill in November 2007 and his only successful defense came against Darnell Wilson, who is brave and certainly can take a shot, but is quite a way from being among the most accomplished cruiserweights in the world. Jones stopped former WBC cruiserweight titleholder Wayne Braithwaite in 2005 and secured a draw against long-reigning WBO titlist Johnny Nelson in 2002. Having started his career as a welterweight, he also drew with France's Laurent Boudouani in a challenge for the WBA super welterweight title in 1998 before losing the rematch on a split decision. He also dropped a split decision in 2005 against Steve Cunningham, who has since won the IBF cruiserweight title.

Jones, 36-3-2 (28), caught the 38-year-old Arslan with ease in the first round and, by round three, he had landed with sufficient authority and frequency to open a deep cut on Arslan's top lip. The German's nose was also busted badly, and the blood that smeared his face and dripped down his torso made him look a sorry sight. Puerto Rican referee Luis Pabon asked the ringside doctor to inspect Arslan's lip before the third round was over, but, despite

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Jones' jab splits Arslan's guard

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Sosa comes off the floor to stop Jaro

the severity of the wound, which caused him to swallow a lot of blood, he was allowed to continue.

Arslan, 29-4-1 (18), tried to mount a rally in the next couple of rounds, but for all his determination, he was simply outgunned and outmaneuvered. Jones was particularly productive with his uppercuts in close and he kept hurting Arslan with his hooks, but the German showed commendable courage to fight back. A sustained assault by the 36-year-old Jones in the ninth round broke much of his remaining resistance, however, and in the 10th round, the referee was compelled to intervene at the 2:33 mark with Arslan on the end of a remorseless battery of blows.

Promoter: **Universum-Box**
(9-27-08)
Brian Doogan

Edgar Sosa W 12 Sonny Boy Jaro

Mexico City, Mexico: Boxing's busiest beltholder, Sosa made his sixth defense of the WBC 108-pound title in 14 months, but nearly got caught looking past the lightly regarded Jaro to defense number seven. A sudden left hook to the jaw from the Filipino in the ninth round floored Sosa and hurt him badly, but he recovered, won virtually every other round, and captured a lopsided decision.

Fighting before a crowd of more than 12,000 fans at the Arena Mexico in his hometown, Sosa, 108, was in charge all the way except for the ninth-round blip. The 26-year-old Jaro, 108, who'd done little to deserve a title shot since losing by fourth-round knockout to clubfighter Danilo Pena in June '07, didn't have the skills to compete with the veteran titlist, but he did possess a strong punch, which was how he flirted with the possibility of an upset. After the flush hook in the ninth, however, Sosa, 29, beat Panamanian referee Hector Afu's count and got back to business to win by scores of 117-110 (twice) and 118-109.

Not surprisingly, Sosa made plans to return to the ring in short order, with a mandatory defense against veteran Juanito Rubillar in Mexico.

Promoter: **Prestige Boxing Promotions**
(9-27-08)

Yuriorkis Gamboa KO 2 Marcos Ramirez

***Temecula, California*:** After their man's sloppy HBO debut against Darling Jimenez in May, Gamboa's team fired trainer Osmiri Fernandez and brought in Ismael Salas to work on the exciting Cuban's defects. Five

months later, Gamboa, 126½, returned to the network and made quick work of Ramirez, 126, but showed that he still has plenty of rough edges.

Gamboa, 12-0 (10), was rocked in the first round before being dropped by an unintentional elbow. He got through the round, and then unleashed his fury on Ramirez, 25-1 (16), a Kansas City, Kansas, firefighter who was taking a sizeable step up in class. Gamboa dropped the 27-year-old twice in the second, with Ramirez counted out at the 1:41 mark of the round.

Gamboa showed uncharacteristic patience in the opening moments at Pechanga Resort and Casino as he tried to box his taller opponent, but Ramirez landed a few hard left hooks from a distance over Gamboa's low guard. Ramirez, who hadn't fought in 16 months due in part to a divorce and the death of his infant child, then drilled Gamboa at short distance with a pair of left hooks before appearing to score a knockdown with a right to the jaw.

Replays showed that Gamboa, who was down for the third time in his career, was actually hit by Ramirez' elbow after the right hand zipped past his chin. At any rate, the 2004 Olympic gold medalist hopped back up, took the eight-count, and then got in a few good shots upstairs as Ramirez flurried to capitalize on the knockdown. Ramirez came back with a flush left hook to the chin in the final 10 seconds.

The early success might have been the worst thing for Ramirez, an 11-1 underdog. He got a bit too courageous against the cocky Gamboa, who continued to fight with his guard low. A minute into the second round, he dropped Ramirez with a blazing three-punch combo punctuated by an uppercut to the jaw. Ramirez fell to a knee, got up at eight, and then attempted to trade.

Gamboa made him pay with several hard, wild hooks. Thirty seconds after the first knockdown, Ramirez was on a knee again after taking a right cross and a right uppercut along the ropes. He appeared to get up just before referee Jerry Cantu (USA) counted 10, but Cantu gave an obvious quick count that ended the fight. It's hard to believe Ramirez would have lasted much longer.

Gamboa's Germany-based promoter, Arena Box, announced shortly after the fight that it had ended its relationship with Gary Shaw as a U.S.-based partner. Rumored to be in the running to fill the void were Don King and Golden Boy Promotions, meaning the 26-year-old prospect should remain on American television.

Television: **HBO**
Promoters: **Gary Shaw Productions, Ringside Ticket**
(10-4-08)

Alfredo Angulo KO 10 Andrey Tsurkan

***Temecula, California*:** In the middle bout of HBO's *Boxing After Dark* tripleheader at Pechanga Resort and Casino, rising star Angulo, 154, ripped through the 31-year-old Tsurkan, 153¾, with surprising ease en route to his 10th straight knockout victory.

As expected, the two came out firing in the early rounds, trading powershots at close range. Angulo, 14-0

PHOTO BY JOE MIRANDA

Angulo (right) ignored Tsurkan's shots and kept coming

(11), a 2004 Mexican Olympian now residing in Coachella, California, took his opponent's best shots and kept pushing forward the first two rounds, even as he suffered a cut over his right eye. After getting caught with several bombs, Tsurkan, 26-4 (17), a New York-based Ukranian, tried to establish some distance in round three.

As Tsurkan tried to box, "El Perro" began focusing more on attacking Tsurkan's body. He also started switching smoothly to a southpaw stance. Quicker and stronger, the 26-year-old Angulo seized control of the fight from that point, usually waiting until the second half of each round to unleash his combinations and batter Tsurkan, who needed help getting back to his corner at the end of the seventh.

The fight could have been stopped at that point. Angulo, whose style and chin are reminiscent of Antonio Margarito, tried to end it in the eighth, when he hurt Tsurkan early with a couple of bombs upstairs, then continued to pummel him to the head and body throughout the round.

At the urging of his corner, the brave Tsurkan went out for the ninth and 10th rounds, only to take more unnecessary punishment. Tsurkan was hurt by a left hook to the body midway through the 10th and final round, and then took several unanswered powershots before his corner finally tossed in the towel. It took a few long moments before dangerously inactive referee Tony Krebs (USA) noticed and stepped between the fighters 33 seconds before the final bell. Fittingly, Krebs took an accidental shot from a flurrying Angulo.

According to CompuBox, Angulo landed 400 of 1,211 punches (33 percent), including 49 percent of his powershots. THE RING and all three judges had him ahead 90-81 at the time of the stoppage. "That was the toughest fight of my career," Angulo said. "I got tougher in each round." Afterward, he called out Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. and John Duddy.

Television: **HBO**
Promoters: **Gary Shaw Productions, Ringside Ticket**
(10-4-08)

Sergio Martinez KO 8 Alex Bunema

***Temecula, California*:** A snoozer of a division the past few years, especially in comparison to its talent-rich neighbor to the south, the junior middleweight class is suddenly booming with exciting up-and-coming fighters, including Alfredo Angulo, James Kirkland, Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., Joel Julio, Ronald Hearns, and John Duddy.

Add Martinez to the list, even though he's 33 years old. In his HBO debut, the Argentine slugger burst upon the scene with an impressive dismantling of the Bunema, 152½. The Tennessee-based Congo native had won four straight, including an upset stoppage of Roman Karmazin and a knockout of Walter Matthysse, but he had no answer for the speed and power of Martinez, 154.

Martinez, 44-1-1 (24), dominated the entire way, as Bunema, 30-6-2 (16), couldn't handle his opponent's southpaw jab and furious combinations. Midway through the third, Martinez scored a knockdown with a left hand

PHOTO BY RENE JOHNSON/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Martinez impressed with TKO of streaking Bunema

upstairs. Bunema got up and survived Martinez' followup, but he continued taking punishment in the proceeding rounds as Martinez landed at will.

Bunema seemed to throw his fleeting hopes into landing one lucky right to the chin of Martinez, whose only loss came via seventh-round knockout to Antonio Margarito back in 2000. But the much busier Martinez continued to land off the jab.

The fight was nearly stopped midway through the seventh, when Martinez connected with several unanswered shots. After a one-sided eighth round, Bunema was bleeding from the mouth and both of his eyes were swelling. Referee Raul Caiz Jr. (USA) saw enough at that point, stopping the beating before the start of the ninth.

The CompuBox numbers reflected the pace and dominance of Martinez, who landed 212 of 518 shots (41 percent), as compared to just 31 of 216 (14 percent) for Bunema.

With the win, Martinez picked up an interim belt and crashed THE RING junior middleweight ratings at number six. He's supposed to get a shot at Vernon Forrest, though few expect Forrest to take the fight. "I want to fight Vernon Forrest for the title, or he should vacate it," Martinez said afterward. "I don't want excuses."

PHOTO BY AARON SPRECHER/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Ref Garcia sends Pitalua to a neutral corner

Television: **HBO**

Promoters: **Gary Shaw Productions, Ringside Ticket**

(10-4-08)

Antonio Pitalua KO 6
Jose Armando Santa Cruz

Monterrey, Mexico: With just about any other set of judges for Santa Cruz' November 2007 fight against Joel Casamayor, this fight at Arena Coliseo between Santa Cruz and Pitalua would have been for the lineal lightweight championship of the world. But the judges somehow scored for Casamayor on that night at Madison Square Garden, Santa Cruz was left as little more than the "uncrowned champion," and when Pitalua stunned him with a sixth-round knockout, it earned him not the world title, but rather a date with Edwin Valero for the "interim" WBC belt somewhere down the road.

This alphabet eliminator between offense-minded fighters began ordinarily enough, but everything changed in round four, when Pitalua, 135, Mexico City, Mexico, via Monteria, Colombia, dropped Santa Cruz, 135, Lincoln Heights, California, via Michoacan, Mexico, with an uppercut. The 28-year-old Santa Cruz is something of a sucker for the uppercut, as those who saw his dramatic knockout loss to David Diaz in '06 will recall. But this time around, he made it back to his feet and back into the fight.

Two rounds later, however, 38-year-old puncher Pitalua, 46-3 (40), hurt him again. A barrage of shots connected, putting Santa Cruz, 26-4 (15), down for Mexican referee Lupe Garcia's full 10-count at 2:50 of the sixth.

Pitalua was previously an unknown commodity to most boxing observers outside of Mexico, but now the veteran has our attention. Still, he'll enter the ring an underdog should the fight with unbeaten kayo artist Valero get made.

Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**

(9-20-08)■

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[New Faces]

(Continued from Page 24)

peared. Abandoned by both parents, Victor took care of himself for more than a year, while also looking after Temo. Victor survived by sleeping at friends' houses, working nine-hour days in Kansas alfalfa fields, and sometimes selling drugs. Alerted by teachers who caught on to the family's situation, social services finally stepped in when Victor was 13. The siblings were separated, with Victor getting sent to live with a local foster family.

Two years later, Victor and Temo went to Denver, Colorado, to live with Carmen after she turned 18 and began renting an apartment. While in Denver, Victor worked two jobs, pushing a wheelbarrow for a landscaping company and hauling furniture for a mover. Still, he made time to run mountains and train under former heavyweight contender Ron Lyle at a Salvation Army boxing center.

"I guess it was just a perfect place at the perfect time," Victor said. "From there on, things started going my way."

At 16, Ortiz went to Louisiana for the Junior Olympic National Championships, where he won the title at 132 pounds and was named the tournament's outstanding boxer. He caught the attention of trainer Robert "Grandpa" Garcia, the former IBF junior lightweight titlist. Garcia offered Ortiz a plane ticket to Oxnard, California, and a place to live. Ortiz accepted a few weeks later, after his sister was evicted from her apartment.

Garcia and his father, Eduardo, continued developing the aggressive southpaw style originally taught Ortiz by Ignacio "Bucky" Avila back in Kansas. They turned Ortiz pro in June of 2004, after a loss to Anthony Peterson in the Olympic Trials. The following year, Ortiz got a high school degree from Pacifica High School and moved into an Oxnard apartment with Temo.

Guided by the Garcias, manager Cameron Dunkin, and promoter Top Rank, Ortiz developed into a rising sensation over the next three years despite working and taking college classes on the side, and despite taking a couple of unfortunate hits on his ring record.

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Ortiz fires a southpaw jab at Arrieta en route to a fifth-round TKO victory. Arrieta did a lot of trash talking, but it didn't faze Ortiz, who has had to overcome criticism throughout most of his boxing career.

In the first round of his eighth pro fight, Ortiz was disqualified for knocking Corey Alarcon unconscious with an uppercut off a clinch. In January 2007, a bout with fellow prospect Marvin Cordova Jr. was ruled a technical draw after a round due to a headbutt that opened a nasty gash on Ortiz' head.

As Ortiz developed, disputes between him and his team began to arise, mostly over money. Robert Garcia's brother, Danny, took over as trainer after the Cordova bout.

"People were saying that I wouldn't be any good," Ortiz said. "[Eduardo Garcia] was always saying that I don't have what it takes to reach the top. They just treated me pretty bad."

Still, Ortiz reached a new level in late-2007 with a 10th-round stoppage of vet Emmanuel Clottey, then a stunning one-punch, first-round knockout of former beltholder Carlos Maussa on the Miguel Cotto-Shane Mosley undercard. But following the Maussa win, Garcia's momentum was stymied as disputes with his team kept him sidelined for six months.

Ortiz wound up filing for bankruptcy to get out of his contract with Top Rank. In May, Shelly Finkel and Rolando Arrellano took over as co-managers after reaching a settlement with Dunkin and the Garcias. Ortiz signed with De La Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions shortly thereafter.

Ortiz stayed busy during the layoff, sparring and reportedly holding his own with Manny Pacquiao. But his focus was damaged by the out-of-the-ring chaos preceding his May return on the De La Hoya-Steve Forbes undercard against Dairo Esalas, who wound up scoring a flash knockdown in the third. The knockdown woke up Ortiz, who dropped Esalas in the third, fourth, and fifth rounds before the fight was stopped.

Ortiz looked much sharper in stopping the typically strong-chinned Arrieta, the same fighter who had gone the distance with rising prospect Vicente Escobedo four months earlier. His often-shaky defense was tighter, something Victor credited to Danny Garcia and new assistant trainer Mario Aguiniga, as well as stability within his new team.

"He's very dedicated," Danny Garcia said. "He wants to be champion. My feeling is he'll be one of the greatest champions."

Next up is a bout on the De La Hoya-Pacquiao undercard on December 6. Notice a pattern? The Golden Boy appears to be taking Ortiz under his wing in hopes of molding him into a future star.

"He talks very highly about Victor Ortiz," Arrellano said of De La Hoya. "He calls Victor Ortiz the next Golden Boy. He mentions him all the time during his press conferences. They text each other to talk about golf. Oscar De La Hoya is really excited about this young man."

It's paying off. Arrellano said Ortiz recently landed a deal with Coca-Cola to endorse the energy drink Full Throttle, and that beer companies are showing interest. "People are starting to see that this guy is the next big deal," said Arrellano.

Ortiz, who still lives with Temo in Oxnard, has a girlfriend back in Garden City and visits there often. He says it's weird that the same people who used to look down on him and avoid speaking with him are now patting him on the back and complimenting him.

Ortiz said it makes him grind his teeth, but added, "It's those people who made me who I am. I guess I can't be too harsh."

Given all that he's been through, Ortiz could be forgiven if he were a bitter, angry mess. (He hasn't spoken to either of his parents since they left. Ortiz saw his mother at Avilar's funeral a couple of years ago, but said she never even looked at him.) Instead, Ortiz comes off as surprisingly friendly, down-to-earth, and mature beyond his years, as if he's at total peace with his past.

"I don't think I'm at peace with it, I'm not going to lie," he said. "There are times when I sit back and I do get sad and a little emotional about it. But I don't expose that side to too many people. Anybody who sees me, they always think I'm the happiest person in the world. I pretty much am. But there are times when you just think about things. Especially nowadays, when De La Hoya talks to me. That's pretty unbelievable.

"God gave me the chance to do something with myself, and I'm running with it." ■

Don Stewart covers boxing for the Reading (Pennsylvania) Eagle and is a regular contributor to THE RING.

Vacant Cruiserweight World Championship

Steve Cunningham

Main Event 12 Rounds

Tomasz Adamek

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

There's always something intriguing about a fight that involves a fighter who likes to constantly move forward and press his opponent, and one who plays the role of the matador, parrying and looking for openings.

That's what boxing fans will get a taste of when slick-boxing IBF cruiserweight titlist Steve Cunningham faces aggressive Tomasz Adamek for the vacant RING *world cruiserweight championship on December 12 at the Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey. The match will be televised by Versus.*

Adamek has made a quick dash up the cruiserweight ratings, after fighting most of his career at light heavyweight. The Pole hasn't been deterred by the size difference, still coming straight-ahead and forcing the action.

Cunningham, a cruiserweight his entire career and THE RING*'s number-one contender, comes from the Chris Byrd school of boxing, thinking defense first.*

But a looming question hovers over "USS Cunningham" as he enters this fight: Will ring rust hamper the outcome? He is coming off the longest layoff of his career and will be fighting for the first time in 347 days. Adamek, on the other hand, has fought three times during that span.

Whether Adamek's activity or Cunningham's inactive will prove the difference in this important match remains to be seen. But one thing's for sure: Barring a draw, a new cruiserweight champion will be crowned.

Steve Cunningham

Tomasz Adamek

Record and World Rating

Cunningham stuns Huck with an overhand right

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Adamek burrows into Gomez

PHOTO BY JOHN BOOZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Is 21-1 with 11 knockouts ... Took up boxing while serving in the U.S. Navy ... Had impressive 48-7 amateur mark, which includes winning 1998 national Golden Gloves 178-pound championship ... Made pro debut in October '00 ... Failed to win vacant IBF cruiserweight title in November '06 ... Won IBF cruiserweight title in May '07 . . . Made one successful defense ... Is rated number one at cruiserweight by THE RING.

Is 35-1 with 24 knockouts ... Went 108-12 during amateur career, which included consecutive Polish National light heavyweight championships and bronze medal at '98 European Championships ... Turned pro in March '99 ... Fought most of his career in Poland, England, Finland, and Spain ... Won vacant WBC light heavy title in May '05 ... Made two successful defenses before losing belt in February '07 ... Is rated number two at cruiserweight by THE RING.

Age and Physical Equipment

Cunningham floors Neal

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Adamek bloodies Briggs in their first clash

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Is 32 years old ... Stands 6'3" with an 82-inch reach ... Sinewy, muscular frame ... Height gives advantage over most opponents ... Does not cut easily ... Decent recuperative powers when in trouble ... Adequate chin, though not invulnerable ... Always in good condition ... Excellent reflexes.

Is 31 years old ... Stands 6'1½" with a 75-inch reach Above-average hand speed ... Prone to cuts and swelling . . . Somewhat undersized for a cruiserweight . . . So-so chin makes him susceptible to flash knockdowns ... Good upper-body strength ... Maintained quickness and dexterity in making smooth transition up to cruiser.

Steve Cunningham

Tomasz Adamek

Best Weapons

Cunningham has Jenkins reeling

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Briggs covers up against Adamek in their second fight

PHOTO BY JONATHAN DANIELS/GETTY IMAGES

Right uppercut is money punch ... Volume punching compensates for lack of one-punch kayo power ... Possesses punishing left jab ... Good hand and foot speed ... Calm under fire ... Combination punching ... Solid finisher.

Uses sharp left jab to set up powerful right cross ... Dangerous left hook ... Effective bodypuncher ... Able to throw mixed bag of punches from assorted angles ... Good power in both hands ... Determination ... Good starter.

Previous Fight

Weathered an early assault by Marco Huck in Bielefeld, Germany, to score 12th-round stoppage in first IBF title defense, in December '07 ... Caught several shots to the head before settling into a rhythm in second round ... Started to evade many of Huck's wild punches in the third ... Landed first big right uppercut in the fifth ... Huck was cut in the seventh ... Staggered Huck in 12th with brutal right uppercut and had him reeling when Huck's corner stopped the fight at 1:56.

Made easy work of grossly overmatched Gary Gomez in July ... Dominated foe throughout, repeatedly pelting the squat clubfighter from the opening bell ... Gomez' wild hooks were greeted with counters to the face ... Superiority in skill and speed gradually wore down Gomez ... By the sixth round, an increased pace finally forced Gomez to quit at 0:01 of the seventh round.

Quality of Opposition

Won first 11 fights against a who's who of journeymen before stepping up and facing Demetrius Jenkins (W 8) ... Built world rating by beating Sebastiaan Rothmann (W 10), Guillermo Jones (W 10), and Kelvin Davis (W12) ... Suffered first and only defeat with 12-round, split-decision setback to Krzysztof Wlodarczyk (L 12) for vacant IBF title in November 2006 ... Avenged that loss in rematch with majority decision over Wlodarczyk (W 12) in May 2007 ... Stopped Marco Huck (KO 12) in first title defense in December 2007.

Beating Paul Briggs twice (W 12, W 12) tops list of achievements ... Prior to first Briggs' fight, fought first 28 bouts exclusively in Europe ... Big victories early in career over Rudi Lupo (W 10) in 11th pro fight and Zdravko Kostic (W 10) three fights later ... Won minor title with wipeout of Ed Dalton (KO 2) ... Captured vacant WBC light heavyweight title in first fight against Briggs ... Stopped Thomas Ulrich (KO 6) in most impressive victory ... Lost title to Chad Dawson (L 12) in February 2007 in third defense ... Made successful jump to cruiserweight by stopping O'Neil Bell (KO 8).

Defense

Uses long reach to keep opponents at safe distance ... Has dangerous tendency to keep hands down by waist ... Slippery in corners, able to use superior foot speed to get out of harm's way ... Slow starter who is willing trade early to test opponent's power.

Much better defensive fighter than acknowledged ... Good head movement ... Tends to fend off punches inside with arms and shoulders ... Does have suspect chin, as shown in second fight against Paul Briggs ... Has trouble with faster fighters, especially in latter rounds.

Steve Cunningham

Tomasz Adamek

Style

Patient, well-rounded boxer who works effectively behind a potent left jab ... Always looking to set up vaunted right uppercut ... Fires a quick one-two ... Does not neglect adversary's body ... Sometimes fights down to inferior opponent's level.

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Guillermo Jones eats a Cunningham right

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Adamek plunges a right into Thomas Ulrich

European-style stand-up boxer-puncher who pressures opponents with straight-ahead approach ... Not above landing an occasional low blow ... Extensive amateur career and world-class competition level enables him to brim with confidence ... Proven finisher when has opponents in trouble.

The Questions

Will the long layoff affect his endurance and timing? How will he deal with Adamek's pressure? Can he withstand Adamek's powerpunches? Will he become reckless in an effort to impress in his first title fight on home soil?

How will he offset Cunningham's reach advantage? Can he avoid Cunningham's right uppercut? Will he be able to throw Cunningham off his game and turn it into a brawl? Will he become the first Pole to win THE RING belt?

The Outcome

Adamek will press Cunningham early, trying to get inside and work the body, while the American tries to keep him at a safe distance, using the jab as a buffer. But that won't last 12 rounds. There figures to be more exchanges as the fight progresses, but look for Cunningham to do enough to take a close but unanimous decision.

April 1937

COVER STORY: "Benny Lynch, The Fighting Scot: New World Flyweight Champion" by A. Frank Tinsley (billed as "a special sportswriter for Reuters") is a colorful if somewhat off-kilter account of Lynch's 15-round decision over Small Montana to win the vacant flyweight championship in London.

Tinsley lead with five paragraphs about Filipino Montana, who he referred to as an "American." He also admitted to "wagering a little something on Montana" and scoring six of the 15 rounds even.

Although his brief description of the fight was well-written, Tinsley took up far more space comparing the venue (Wembley Empire Pool and Sports Arena) with Madison Square Garden, and went to considerable length to contrast the press accommodations.

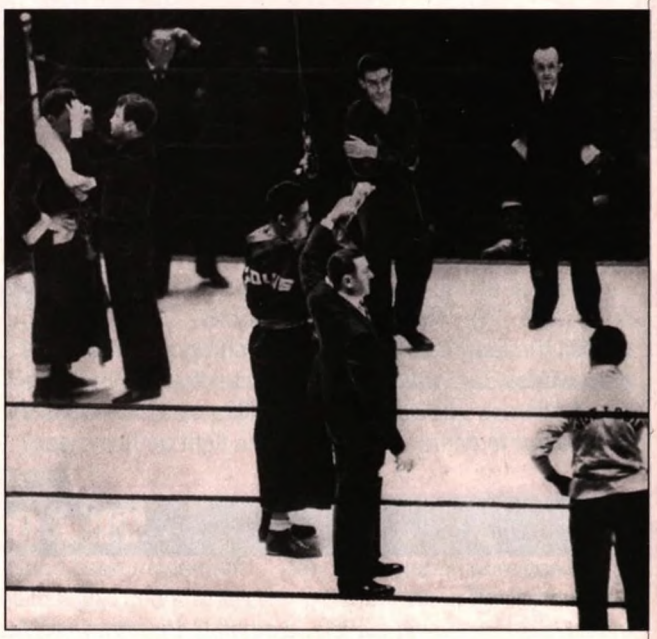
There was an additional mention of the flyweight title bout in "Nat Fleischer Says," where the editor praised the British fans for their "amazing" support of the lighter weight classes: "Considering that a flyweight or even bantam championship mill in this country could scarcely hope to draw a gate of more than $20,000, the $75,000 house these boys drew is an eye-opener."

World Champions

(for the period ended February 11, 1937)
Heavyweight: Jim Braddock
Light Heavyweight: John Henry Lewis
Middleweight: Marcel Thil
Welterweight: Barney Ross
Lightweight: Lou Ambers
Featherweight: Petey Sarron
Bantamweight: Sixto Escobar
Flyweight: Benny Lynch

"Pastor Showed Up Louis' Faults" is Fleischer's critique of Joe Louis 10-round decision over Bob Pastor in front of a capacity crowd at Madison Square Garden. Although Fleischer had no problem with the verdict, he repeatedly ripped Louis for failing to knock out Pastor. The most telling part of Fleischer's account, however, was what he wrote about the crowd's reaction.

"The fans who paid $111,570 to see a thrilling contest saw a running match instead, but they liked it because the white man had fooled the black man, had somewhat humiliated him by remaining on his feet for 10 rounds when



Louis' arm is raised following first Pastor bout

Finnish heavyweight hope Barlund

according to all signs, had he fought, the battle would have ended in a few rounds. Bob must be given some credit for that, at least."

It is worth noting that two fights later, Louis knocked out Jim Braddock to win the heavyweight championship, and that when the "Brown Bomber" gave Pastor a title shot in 1939, Pastor was knocked out in the 11th round.

"The K. O. And Its Mental Reactions" is a theme piece, credited to "The Ring Editor," that recounted some of the peculiar reactions fighters have to being concussed.

One of the tales involved a bout between Jack Sharkey and Tommy Loughran in which a blow to the temple totally discombobulated Loughran, who "walked along the side of the ring toward his corner, where he attempted to sit on a stool that was not there."

There was also a yarn about Young Corbett II getting decked in his bout with Eddie Hanlon: "I thought the canvas was a rising moon," said Corbett. "It became bigger and bigger, and I thought, *Isn't that a beauty?* Finally, it seemed to explode and I heard the referee counting. I got up just in time to beat 10."

Perhaps the strangest story came from Bat Munro, who claimed to remember nothing after being knocked out by Sam Langford except a dream he had while unconscious. In his punch-induced fantasy, Munro won $2-million in a craps game, bought a team of white horses, and drove his best girl to a picnic.

"Who Is Gunnar Barlund?" by Ed Van Every profiles Finland's heavyweight hopeful, who had launched an American campaign in 1936 and tallied four wins on U.S. soil.

"Observers who watched Max Schmeling's early fights say that Barlund at this stage is a better rounded fighter than was Schmeling in his early career, and that is an excellent compliment," wrote Van Every. "The Gunnar is remorseless in his attack. He never lets up."

Shortly afterward, Barlund lost three in a row, which typifies his rollercoaster career from then on. He fought on until 1948, but never got a title shot and retired with an overall record of 55-30-1 (27).

"In Sunny California" by Gene Vinassa features a sarcastic update on heavyweight Hank Hankinson.

"For several years Hank Hankinson has had difficulty getting himself in shape because he liked to drink almost anything up to, but not including water," wrote Vinassa. "Now Big Hank has turned over a new leaf. He has been training religiously since the first of the year. His liquid diet consists solely of milk, coffee, and that delicious new drink—aqua pura. And he's quit smoking and made up his mind to live up to his potentialities in the ring this year."

Alas, Hankinson's new regime didn't help. He went 3-4 in 1937 and retired the next year, following a one-round kayo loss to Max Baer.

Dapper feather king Sarron

"Ring News From South Africa" by Bert Cohen highlights a non-title fight between featherweight champion Petey Sarron and local hero Laurie Stevens in front of 15,000 fans at Johannesburg's Wanders' Stadium.

"After 11 rounds of furious fighting, Sarron smashed home a right to Stevens' unguarded jaw with sufficient force to fell a middleweight. Thus ended Stevens' unbeaten record after four years as a professional fighter," wrote Cohen. "Sarron gave a magnificent display of savage fighting and carried the American colors adorning his corner to glorious distinction." ■

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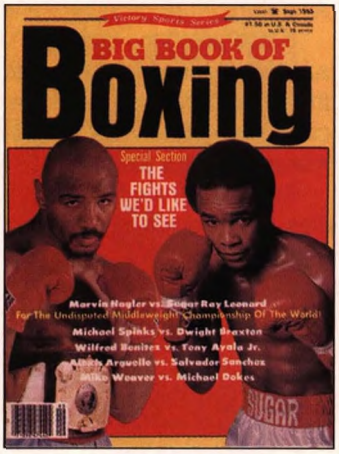

Napoles-Griffith, Ali, Charles, 10 meanest fighters, Spinks-Galindez dream fight.

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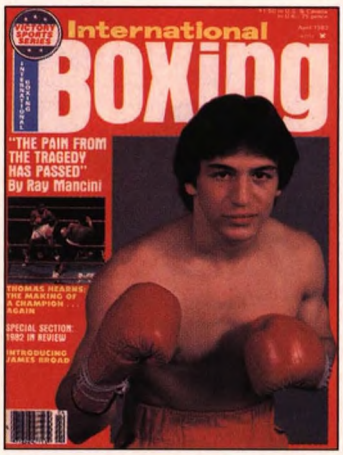

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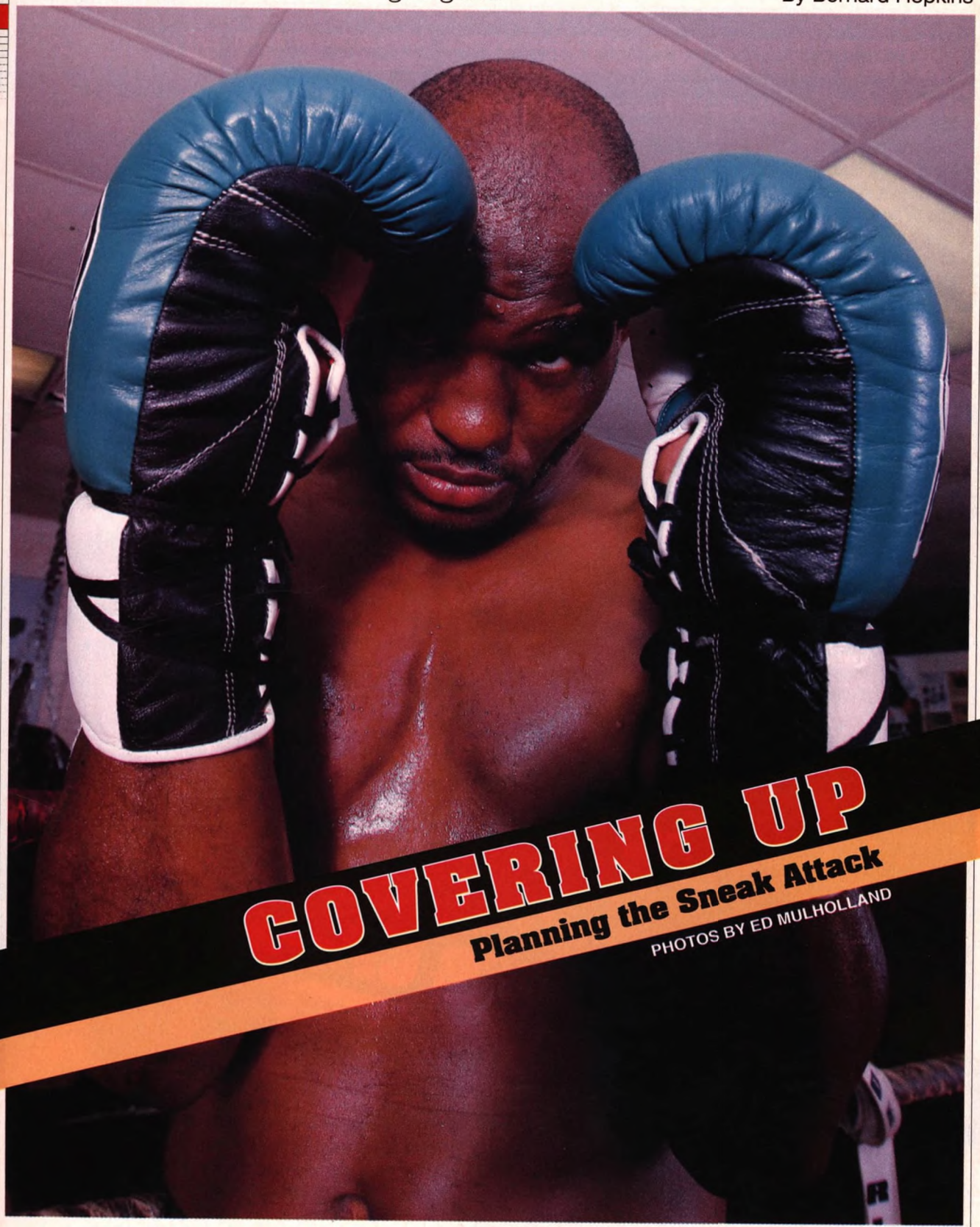
Boxing Lessons From A Living Legend

By Bernard Hopkins



COVERING UP

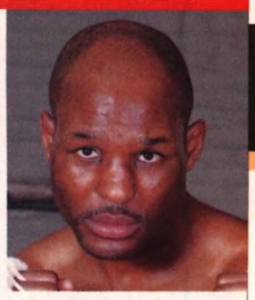
Planning the Sneak Attack

PHOTOS BY ED MULHOLLAND

You'll notice I keep saying one thing over and over in this column: You always want to be in a position to punch. You never want to be in a position where your opponent knows he can hit you but you can't hit him back. When he knows that, you're in trouble—he can take free shots at you and until you get back in position, there's nothing you can do about it. It's your job never to be in that position.

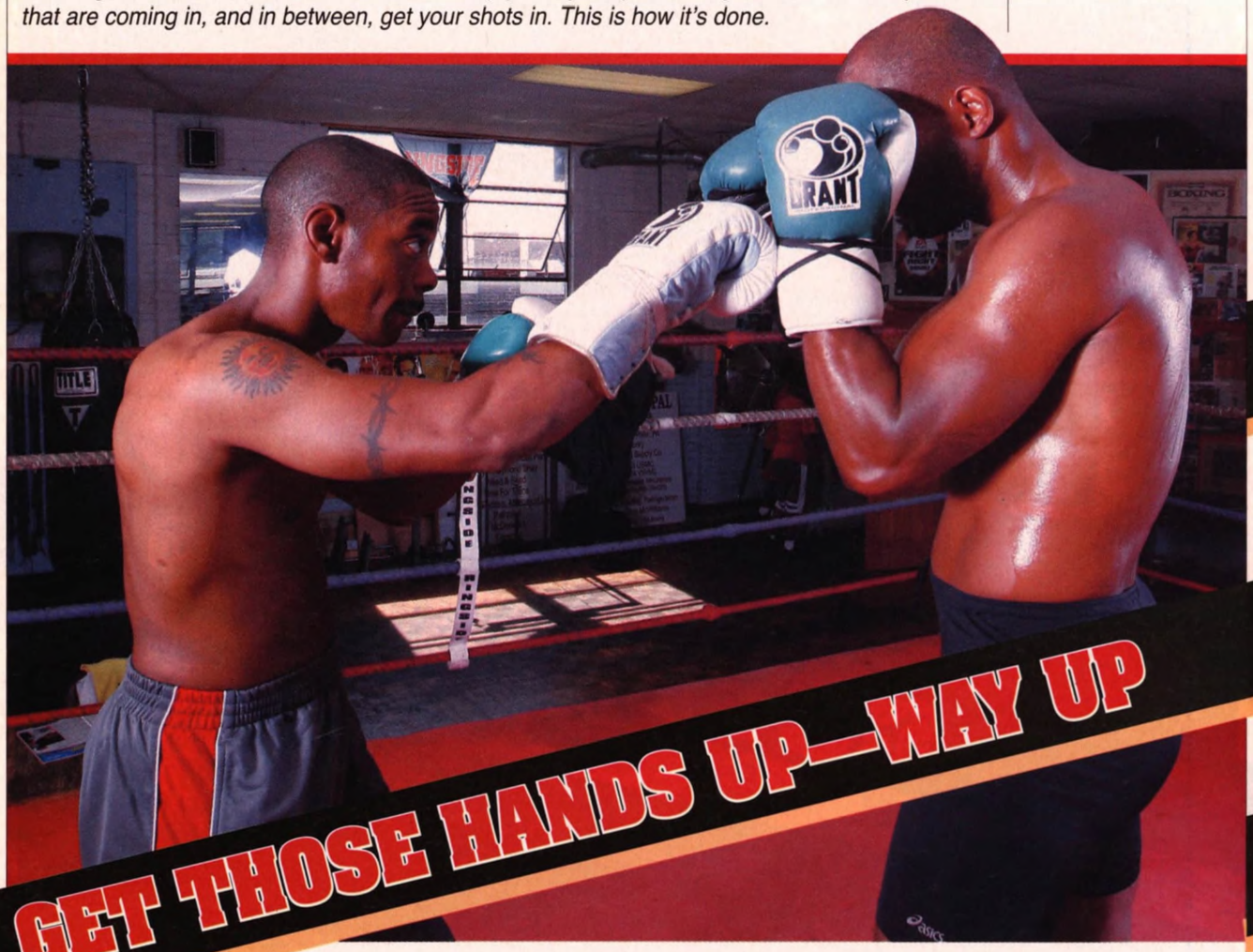
A lot of people think that when a fighter is covering up he's in that position he doesn't want to be in, that it's a totally defensive move. That's wrong. It's a defensive and *offensive move. It's more a defensive than offensive move, but a lot of people do it so they can peek through and get their shots in between when the other guy is punching. It's used to set up punches. It's planning your sneak attack. The best example? Muhammad Ali giving George Forman the Rope-a-Dope.*

Covering up can be dangerous if you don't react in time to be able to make something out of it. Your opponent is getting free shots. But you're giving it to him with the anticipation that you're going to be able to fire in between his shots also. You can set up your shots while the guy thinks you're covering up. You can sneak shots in there. If, however, it becomes a tactic of not getting hit, but not firing back, it doesn't work. You have to keep your eyes open and try to deflect all the punches that are coming in, and in between, get your shots in. This is how it's done.



BERNARD HOPKINS
Is the former middleweight and light heavyweight champion of the world.

(All photos taken at Andy Carr's Gym in Upper Darby, PA)

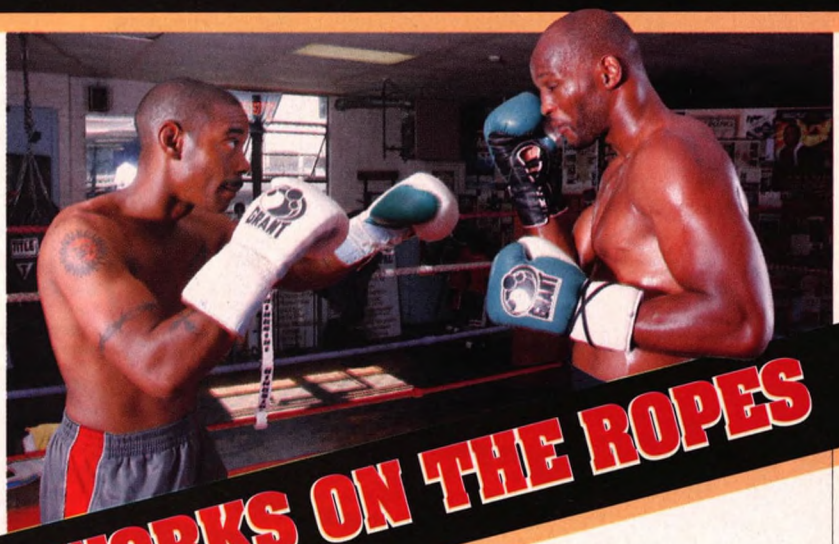


GET THOSE HANDS UP—WAY UP

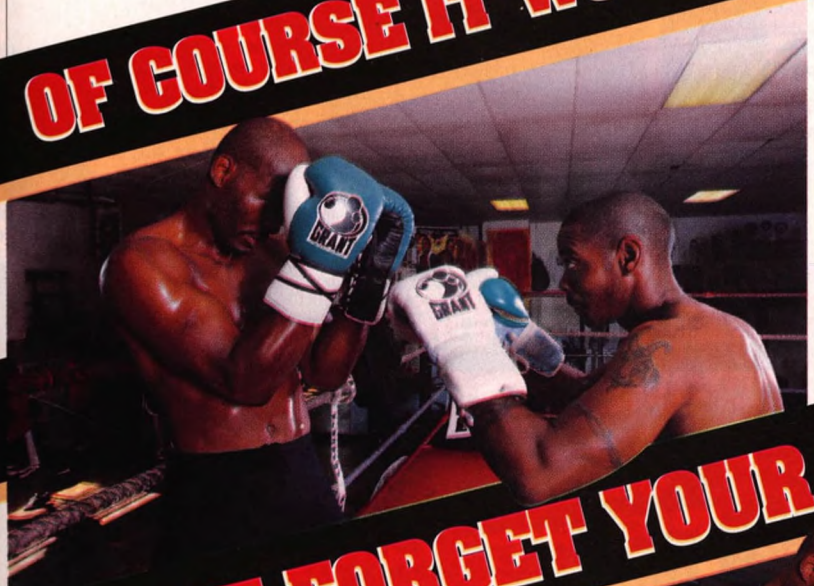
YOU KEEP YOUR HANDS HIGH ALL THE TIME, BUT ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU'RE COVERING UP. Instead of being at your jaw line, they cover your entire face. And as always, your elbows are in to protect your body.

COVERING UP MEANS COVERING UP EVERYTHING

ONE HAND UP AND ONE DOWN IS NOT COVERING UP. If you're standing right in front of your guy, not moving your head and only one hand is up, you're going to get hit. When you're ready to stop covering up, you must move your head, your feet, or start punching.

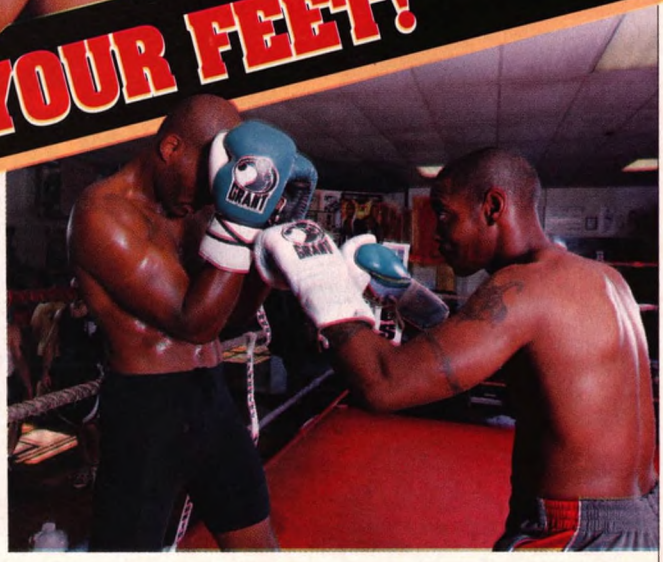


OF COURSE IT WORKS ON THE ROPES



TRAINERS WILL TELL YOU NEVER TO GET CAUGHT ON THE ROPES COVERING UP, BECAUSE THERE'S NOWHERE TO GO. Generally it's true, but if you stay calm, keep your hands up, your chin down, and your eyes open, you'll see everything and be able to counter.

DON'T FORGET YOUR FEET!



THE BIGGEST MISTAKE YOUNG FIGHTERS MAKE WHEN THEY COVER UP ON THE ROPES IS TO FORGET HOW THEIR FEET ARE SUPPOSED TO BE. They should never be parallel; you'll get no leverage on your counterpunches! Notice here that my left foot is still out front, where it's supposed to be, so when I'm ready to counter it'll be a real punch and it'll hurt.

LOOK FOR THE OPENINGS

SEE WHY YOU KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN? My opponent's left is down while he throws a right to the body. I see that and I know I can sneak in a right uppercut there or a short straight right. If my eyes are closed I don't see the opening and I don't score. He gets free shots.

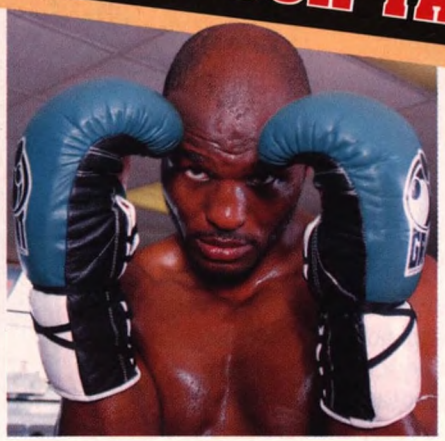
COVER AND COUNTER

THIS IS WHAT COVERING UP CAN DO FOR YOU. Your opponent thinks he's getting a free shot and opens up. You've been waiting for it so you can counter—and deliver the hook to the body. And because you're in position, it hurts.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

THE COVER AND COUNTER TAKES PRACTICE, LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE. Here Danny Davis puts me through the paces on the pads.

SEE YOUR TARGET



THIS IS WHAT YOUR OPPONENT SHOULD SEE LOOKING BACK AT HIM WHEN YOU'RE COVERING UP: hands high, chin down, elbows tucked, and you getting ready to attack.

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[All-color beginning with the March 2001 issue]

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5989/10-08

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

There's No Off-Season For Boxers

Accomplished fighters like Diego Corrales, Jose Luis Castillo, and now Joan Guzman were all failures in making weight, but more than that, like a multitude of others, they just didn't get it. They didn't understand their destiny was sealed in the patterns of behavior begun early in their professional and amateur careers.

As fans, we make excuses. It is tougher making weight as you age. He had an eating disorder. He was forced to compete in a weight class below his body size to gain an edge. He had an injury going into training camp. *Blah, blah, blah.*

We have heard these stories so many times, we gloss over the details because they are always the same.

Solutions are ignored, including changing the timing of the weigh-in, serial weigh-ins, allowing only specific amounts of weight gain between the weigh-in and fight, or more drug testing.

Irrespective of their explanation, fighters frequently fail to understand that boxing is a full-time job and fail to take personal responsibility for their actions.

Guzman was scheduled to face lightweight titleholder Nate Campbell on September 13 on Showtime in Biloxi, Mississippi. Guzman, who had won alphabet belts at 122 and 130 pounds, vacated his junior lightweight title following a defense postponement. Therefore, he had not fought since beating Humberto Soto in November 2007.

With plenty of advanced notice and knowing he had to make 135 pounds, Guzman headed to training camp six weeks before the scheduled match, weighing a whopping 172 pounds! He needed to drop 20 percent of his body weight.

Guzman, with well-established weight issues, re-enlisted the help of SXFitness. The co-founders, Dave "Scooter" Honig and David Buer, have a combined 30 years of experience with clientele ranging from Vivian Harris and Zab Judah to LL Cool J and Leonardo DiCaprio. In fact, Honig was directly responsible for Guzman's conditioning when he beat Jorge Barrios and Antonio Davis.

SXFitness offers boxers a unique training program combined with cutting edge (legal) supplements and a diet plan. In this manner, a fighter can improve functional power, strength, flexibility, balance, and aerobic and anaerobic conditioning. But he has to show up physically and mentally prepared.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Guzman works hard in the gym, but not between fights

Guzman did everything his trainer and conditioning experts asked, but the uphill battle became impossible. A body can only do so much. Despite sweating in a sauna wearing a plastic suit, Guzman arrived at the day-before-the-fight weigh-in 3½ pounds over the 135-pound limit.

He returned to his hotel room grossly dehydrated. As nausea often accompanies severe fluid loss, Guzman began vomiting blood. He was taken to the hospital, where he received three liters of intravenous fluid. In most instances, one liter would be sufficient, so Guzman was *very* dry.

Only a few hours before the fight, the Mississippi commission physician was called. He declared Guzman unfit to compete.

During the telecast, Guzman

spoke to Showtime's Jim Gray, commenting that perhaps supplements resulted in his gaining weight. He later issued a public statement personally castigating his actions.

"I was wrong and I apologize. There is no one else to blame ... Put the blame on me, Joan Guzman, because I was completely at fault. My conduct in this important matter was unprofessional. I rolled the dice by coming in too heavy at the start of my training camp. I was able to get away with this many times before, but, at age 32, my body shut down on me with 3½ pounds to go. My metabolism rejected taking off so many pounds in a short period."

Honig explains, "[Some] fighters come to camp to lose weight, not to get into condition and not to improve their performance. They wear rubber suits and wear themselves out; their body dehydrates and they train dehydrated."

Not all fighters blow up between fights. Bernard Hopkins, Antonio Margarito, and Manny Pacquiao, for example, train between bouts.

"It is their job to stay in shape," agreed Honig.

Buer, who competed in USA track and field as well as in semi-pro football, believes that boxing's approach to conditioning remains in the dark ages, while sports like track and football have evolved.

"Other athletes realize it is the off-season where you do most of your preparation. It is the training between fights that will benefit them the most," said Buer. "You can't drop 40 pounds in a month and still get faster, quicker, better conditioned, and work on your technique. Besides fat, you are going to lose muscle."

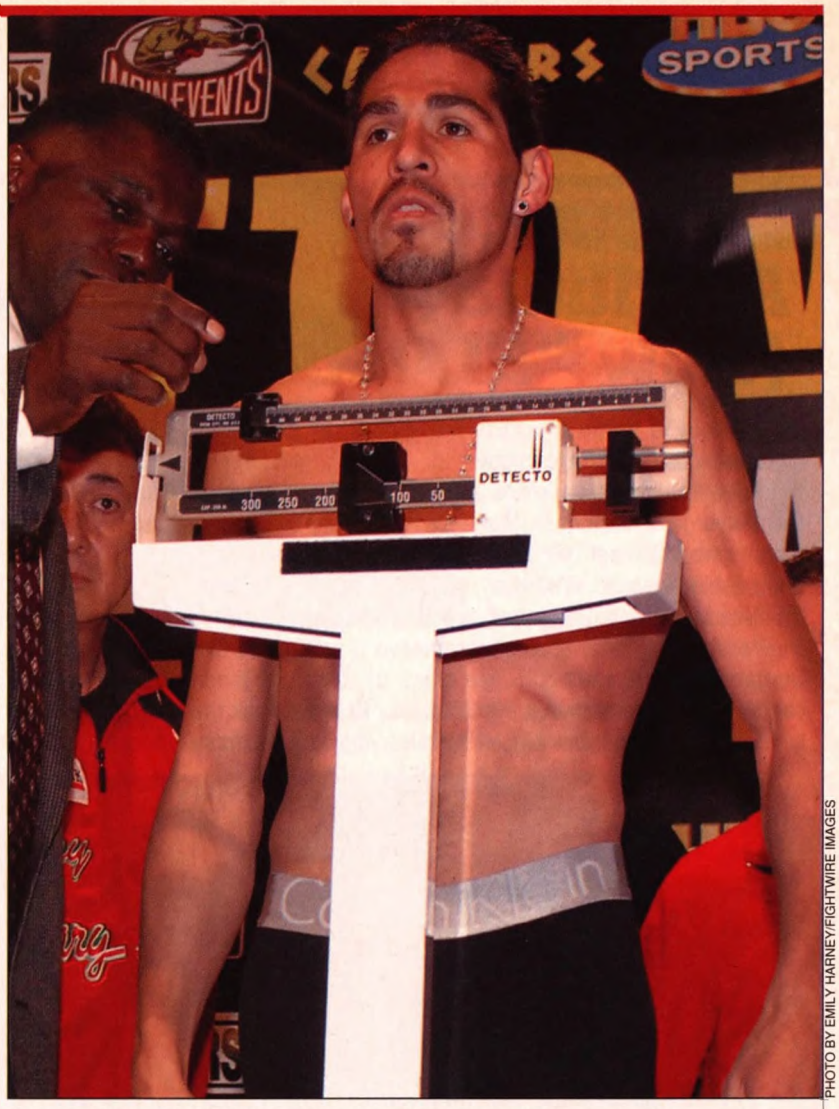


PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Fighters such as Margarito benefit by always staying in shape

Both experts agree a fighter should walk around within 10 pounds of their fighting weight and should eat for their activity level. That way, by the time they get to camp, there are no drastic changes, and they can concentrate on the job at hand—preparing for their opponent.

Camp must include far more than sparring and roadwork.

"Boxers don't fight at the pace of roadwork," said Buer. "It is only 60 percent of the maximum effort they must give in the ring, and then they wonder why they are out of shape in a fight."

Attempting to garner an edge, many trainers take capable fighters and shrink them down to fight smaller guys. When combined with years of constant weight fluctuation, their systems are so traumatized the public never really gets to see them at their best. Despite the ability to adjust while young, these boxers never truly realize their own potential. This, in turn, shortens their career and places them at undue risk in the ring.

The elephant in the room that few wish to discuss is cost. Sure, only a small minority of boxers coming through the ranks can afford experts like SXFitness, but fighters still need to train for the champion they wish to be.

Boxers need to develop muscle strength and power between bouts. The old concepts of starving in training camp to make weight and abusing themselves between fights need to be put to rest, as it doesn't work in the long run.

Many top fighters, such as Erik Morales, Tito Trinidad, James Toney, and Arturo Gatti, had successful careers *despite* their weight issues. But they might have been even more successful had they treated their job as a full-time position without an off-season.

We can only hope that Guzman and other fighters who behave in the same fashion will recognize that they don't have to remain victims. By learning from their mistakes, they can change the status quo and control their future. ■

By Jim Bagg

A Tribute To "El Matador" (Now "El Doormat")

It would be a reach to suggest that the Baggmeister and Ricardo Mayorga were separated at birth, since Mayorga was born in Managua, Nicaragua, in 1973, and the world's most beloved boxing columnist was born in a log cabin closer to 1793 than 1973. But at the very least, "El Matador" and "El Baggador" are kindred spirits.

We share a fondness for fermented beverages. The Surgeon General can't convince either of us to quit those cancer sticks. We both talk the talk better than we walk the walk. (In fact, if you saw Uncle Baggie trying to walk these days, you'd wonder why a guy with Joe Namath's knees and Yoda's posture hasn't gone the wheelchair route yet.) And, sad as it is to admit, we're both losers.

When Mayorga's boxing career is all over—and it's probably getting close to that point now, which is part of why the Baggareeno is penning this tribute to him—he's going to be remembered mostly as the guy who consistently got knocked out by the best of his era. He has morphed from the undisputed welterweight champion of the world and a respected, feared, and pound-for-pound-ranked fighter into the fall guy of choice for future Hall of Famers in need of a win. If there was a Mount Rushmore of modern welterweights/junior middleweights, Felix Trinidad, Oscar De La Hoya, and Shane Mosley would all have their faces on there. And Mayorga has the distinction of getting splattered by all of them.

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Mayorga is Bagg's sort of guy

It would be a shame, however, if the Nicotine-in' Nicaraguan is recalled by future generations as just a bum with his name on the records of superstars. By no means is Mayorga a great fighter. By no means does he belong in Canastota, or even on the Hall of Fame ballot. But he was better than he now gets credit for, and he was certainly as fun as any fighter who's come along this decade.

Let's recall some of the positives: He hammered the crap out of Andrew "Six Heads" Lewis, who was undefeated and well regarded at the time, to capture his first belt. Then, after a 10-month layoff, he stormed out and demolished Vernon Forrest inside three rounds for the real welterweight championship—and this was when Forrest was undefeated and the reigning Fighter of the Year. He beat Forrest again in a close rematch, and probably would have been Fighter of the Year himself in 2003 if he'd gotten the deci-

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Mayorga at his best, blasting Forrest

sion against Cory Spinks in a close fight in which he didn't get credit for a knockdown and was penalized two points.

After that, the bad obviously outweighed the good. He's gone 3-3 since losing the title to Spinks, and though he claimed another alphabet belt and ended the career of Fernando Vargas, that clearly doesn't balance out with three knockout losses. But you have to admit: He was more competitive than anyone expected him to be against Mosley. And in losing to Trinidad, he was thrilling if not overly successful.

Why is it that some fighters throw punches incorrectly and from odd angles and get labeled "awkward," while others do the same thing and are said to have no technique and no skills? El Matador routinely gets the latter tag, even though Mosley and Forrest, two well-schooled boxers, would probably tell you that he's awkwardly effective.

Could Mayorga have achieved more than he did? Most definitely. He partied his way through many of his training camps, he presumably limited his lung capacity with his Marlboro Man routine, and he never made an effort to expand his boxing repertoire. But therein lies his charm. That's why he's been one of the Baggerific's favorite fighters of this era. Because he is who he is, he makes no apologies, he does it his way, and nobody's going to make him into something he's not.

If not for the fact that he has so much in common with the Baggitarius, Mayorga would be a true one of a kind. Instead, we're two of a kind. So, Ricky, anytime you want to come to the Baggster's 'hood and throw a few back, enjoy some smokes, and talk some trash, there's always an open seat at the bar for you.

(And if there isn't an open seat, something tells the Baggamaniac you'll find a way to make a seat open up.)

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Let's not forget that Naz beat some good fighters, including Kevin Kelley

Speaking Of Fighters Getting A Bum Rap ...

When exactly did Naseem Hamed become the gold standard for fighters who turn out to be flops? When Amir Khan got liquefied by Breidis Prescott in 54 seconds, we immediately heard talk from some corners about how Khan was a fraud, just like Naseem Hamed. Granted, the comparison makes superficial sense, since they're both Brits of Arab descent. But when did you ever see Naz getting knocked out in one round by a nobody? In fact, when did Hamed ever get knocked out? And didn't he round up every single belt in the featherweight division before finally flopping against Marco Antonio Barrera?

A few weeks later, when

athletic Cuban prospect Yuriorkis Gamboa took on Marcos Ramirez on *Boxing After Dark*, analyst Max Kellerman wondered whether Gamboa would be another Roy Jones or another Naseem Hamed, as if the latter was a bad thing. Currently a 12-0 (10) prospect who's become as familiar with the floor as a high school janitor, Gamboa should be thrilled if he turns out to have half the career that Hamed had. Maybe, Max, you should have asked if Gamboa would turn out to be the next Roy Jones or the next Eddie Hopson.

Look, nobody hated "The Prince" in his prime more than the Baggmatician. Hamed was a new-school punk, not the flavor of choice for an old-school drunk. But even those who disliked the gimmick have to admit that the Howdy-Doody-eared puncher accomplished a lot and had a productive career. He didn't handle defeat well, and he plateaued at a young age and started mailing it in thereafter. But Hamed was no flop. He was the best 126-pounder in the world for a few years, and he forever changed the pay scale for fighters that size.

Let's see if Gamboa can make any comparable claims when his career is done.

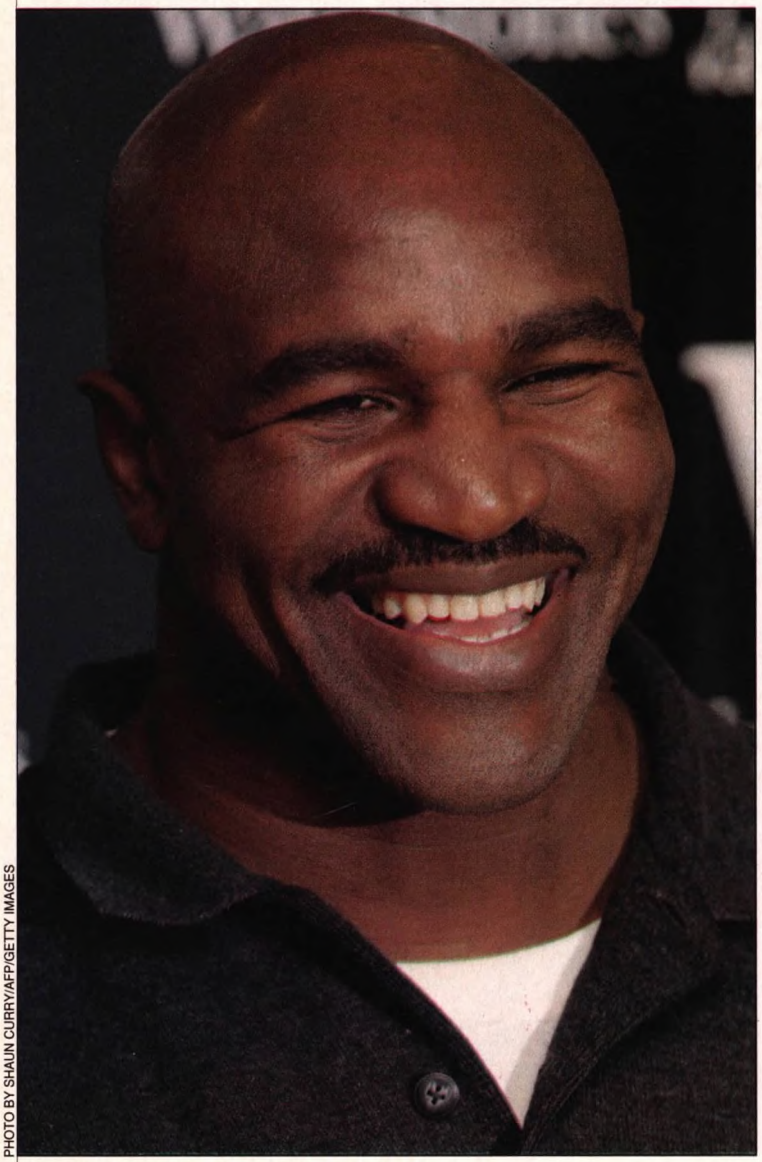


PHOTO BY SHAUN CURRY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Fighting Valuev is no laughing matter

Bagg Identity Theft

Is the Baggalini moonlighting as a boxing judge? That's the question on everyone's mind (well, two "Hitting On The Break" readers, anyway) after a New Mexico-based judge named James Bagshaw worked the Raul Garcia-Jose Luis Varela 105-pound alphabet title fight on September 13.

For the record, Jim Bagg and James Bagshaw are not the same man. If the Bagg-a-donuts was going to use an alias, don't you think he might try something a wee bit less similar to his real name? Throw in the fact that there's a restraining order keeping the Baggapalooza from ever entering the Albuquerque city limits again, and it's simply impossible that Bagg and Bagshaw could be the same guy.

It is a pretty wild coincidence, though. And if the Baggosaurus gets word that this fight judge runs around referring to himself in the third person and calling himself "the Bagshawmeister," then Bagshaw's going to have a meaty copyright infringement lawsuit on his hands.

David Without A Slingshot

We're all suckers for a good underdog story (which is why so many people were rooting for the Baggnanarama's third marriage to work out). And when it comes to underdog angles, it doesn't get much better than a 46-year-old Evander Holyfield giving up a full *100 pounds* to try to win an alphabet belt from Nicolay Valuev. Bear in mind, this fight may not become reality. As of this writing, it was more in the "rumor" stage than anything else. But if the fight happens and Holyfield pulls off the win, this would be a feel-good story on par with George Foreman winning the heavyweight championship from Michael Moorer at age 45—despite the fact that Foreman won the real title and Holyfield is fighting for just a fraction of the WBA belt that Gil Mendoza decided to chop in half after Ruslan Chagaev's most recent injury.

Holyfield beating Valuev would be one of the truly great, moving moments in boxing history. There's just one problem: There's a zero percent chance of "The Real Deal" winning. Holyfield is a shot fighter with about 30 seconds of effectiveness left in his body for any given 12-round fight. Yeah, he surprised us a couple of years back by narrowly defeating Fres Oquendo. But the spectacular punch that knocked down the chinny "Big O" and made the difference in the fight will never happen against Valuev. Holyfield will have a heckuva chore just reaching his chin, much less connecting

The Monthly Mailbagg

Every now and then, the Bagger King likes to publish an e-mail verbatim so you can see the sort of illiterate idiocy he has to deal with from the commoners. So, in all of its unedited glory, here is this month's sign that man has not yet completed its evolution from apes:

bagg how do you feel obo..the del a hoya vs. pacman fight.will this be good for boxing or should del a yoya fight someone his own size.i know in the 30's & 40's it was more common,but this fight just doesn't seem right,even thow i'll most likely watch it.

Dean

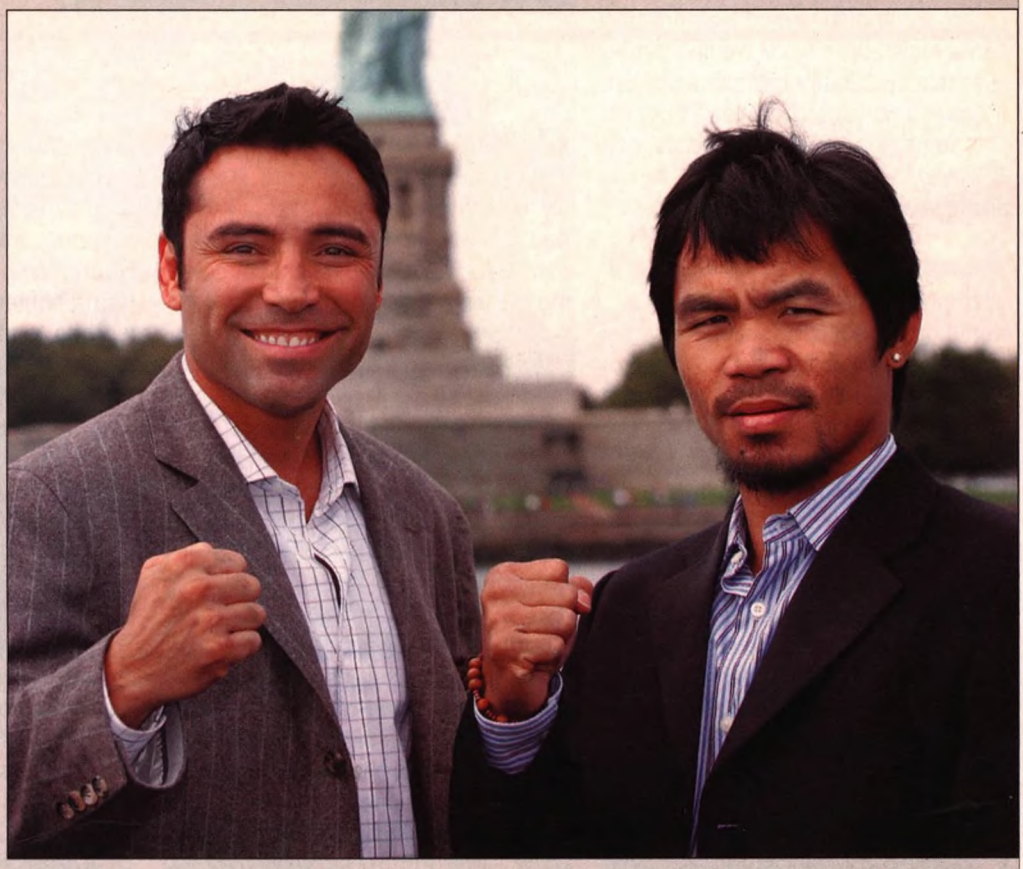


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Even the spelling impaired will watch

Dean (presumably that's your name, not your title),

To be honest, the Baggtronicity thinks it's a competitive matchup because Del A Yoya isn't what he used to be. In his prime, Del A Yoya would be too much for the Filipino. But if you really want to know how the Baggzinger feels obo this fight, he thinks Pacquiao (good thing you didn't try to spell that one) has an excellent chance of winning, even thow he's the smaller man.

Naturally, the Baggnammit is counting down the days until December 6, so he can check his e-mail inbox for your insightful postfight analysis.

with it cleanly enough and hard enough to do damage. One shot from Evander turning the tables against Bigfoot ain't gonna happen.

The way for a smaller fighter to upset the 7'1" Valuev is to do what Ruslan Chagaev did: Get in and out and score with quick-strike shots, pulling the trigger at all the right times. Well, gee, that sounds like a perfect description of everything that Holyfield hasn't been able to do in about a decade.

We all love a good underdog story. But only when the underdog has a prayer.

And The Stingray Goes To ...

Jose Pedro Ramon Saez, who had even more losses than he had names heading into his stunning upset win over 15-0 (8) prospect Mauricio Munoz in Chubut, Argentina, in September. At 15-7-2 (8), the 33-year-old Saez was supposed to be just another notch on the 23-year-old Munoz' belt, but instead he notched a win in one of the most thrilling under-the-radar fights of the year.

Both fighters hit the deck in a wild second round, and Saez was knocked down again in the seventh round, but the supposed "opponent" kept his focus and hung on to win a unanimous 10-round decision. Saez' nickname is "Pamperito," and he exposed Munoz as perhaps a bit of a Pamperito'd prospect en route to claiming this month's Stingray Award.

Honorable mention, meanwhile, must go to former cruiserweight king Al Cole, who returned from a 3½-year retirement in September at age 44 and somehow won a six-round split decision over heavily favored Joey Abell. This brings Cole's record to 4-10-2 since the year 2000. It wasn't quite a good enough win to bag him the Stingray—Abell is from Minnesota and when's the last time you heard of a good fighter from Minnesota?—but it was a fine win. And, please don't take this the wrong way, Al, but it would also make a fine way to exit the sport of boxing. ■

Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com.

Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Living Legend

Congratulations to Bernard Hopkins for disproving boxing experts once again with his outclassing of Kelly Pavlik. Maybe THE RING and other boxing writers will finally realize how overrated Kelly Pavlik was. I have never before heard of a fighter being ranked in the top-10 pound-for-pound ratings based on beating only *one* good fighter in their entire career. THE RING fell victim to Pavlik's good-old-American-boy story and failed to see that he is slow and one-dimensional. Hopkins took advantage of those weaknesses and showed us once again why "The Executioner" is a legend.

I wouldn't be surprised if Hopkins is still beating world champions when he's 80. I will still be a huge fan then, just with a few more wrinkles and few less hairs on my head.

SPENCER VAN VLOTEN
Vancouver, BC

Heavy Matters

Been reading THE RING for over 40 years and your November 2008 issue was one of the best issues you have put out in a while. Is there anybody who can stay with Chris Arreola? He is a beast, throws combinations like a young Mike Tyson. He is the most exciting fighter I have seen in a while. If he can get in condition, he could be the savior of the heavyweight division in the United State and bring the title home. I would love to see him fight some of the top contenders.

Also, you need to go ahead and recognize Wladimir Klitschko as the heavyweight champion; these alphabet boys are never going to get their stuff together. Everybody knows Wladimir is the uncrowned champion. It would add a lot of clarity to the division. We look to THE RING as the voice of reason in regards to boxing.

MARK MCKEE
Richardson, TX

Editor's note: THE RING has no intention of deviating from its established criteria for filling championship vacancies. To do so for convenience's sake or to appease fans would seriously erode our mission of restoring integrity to championship boxing.

Little Big Men

You guys at THE RING do an excellent job of covering boxing and the sport is much better for it. But a simple suggestion, if you don't mind: How about covering more of the little guys, fighters under 122 pounds. There are a lot of wonderful fighters and fights being made between 118 and 105, especially the 115-pound class—Cristian Mijares, Fernando Montiel, Vic Darchinyan, and Nonito Donaire, just to name a few. These guys have put on some of the best fights of the past year, and I think they deserve some press for their efforts. Plus, it would educate those who are not too familiar with the lower-weight classes and pro-

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Bernard Hopkins connects with one of the 97 powerpunches he landed during his unanimous decision over middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik. Reader Spencer Van Vloten writes to chide THE RING for overestimating Pavlik and congratulate B-Hop on his upset victory.

PHOTO BY ANDREAS RENTZ/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Sam Peter put up more of a fight at the press conference, when he played tug-of-war with Vitali Klitschko over the WBC strap, than he did once the fight started. Reader Bernard Aguirre was disgusted by Peter's shameful showing and accused Peter of having "no heart."

vide some much needed attention for these fighters.

JERRY CORNELIUS
bottle_rocketjc@yahoo.com

Pitiful Peter

First of all, congratulations to Vitali Klitschko for coming out of a long layoff and then beating Sam Peter for the WBC title. He should be a frontrunner for Comeback of the Year. That said, I am absolutely disappointed by Peter's lack of effort during the fight. What kind of professional, respected champion would turn up to a fight out of shape, devoid of a game plan, and then quit on his stool rather than going for broke?

Buddy and Max Baer ham it up for publicity photo, but never fought each other in a real fight. Nonetheless, after reading "Klitschko vs. Klitschko: The Biggest Heavyweight Fight That Will Never Happen," promoter J Russell Peltz wrote to tout a fantasy fight between the Baer brothers.

Peter didn't show up to fight. He showed up to hand Vitali back the belt and then go home—simple as that. I guess we now know a little more about the "Nigerian Nightmare." He's all talk, no skill, no discipline, and now, it seems, no heart. What a shame!

BERNARDO AGUIRRE
Sydney, Australia

Teacher's Pet

I would just like to say that I really enjoy "Perfect Execution." Who better to learn boxing techniques from than former world champion and future Hall of Famer Bernard Hopkins?

STEVE MINX
steve_juggernaut@yahoo.com

Unpredictability Equals Excitement

I read that after the Breidis Prescott-Amir Khan fight that Prescott was considered a poor choice of opponents for Khan. Why, because he had a good chance of winning? To the fans of boxing, a match between two young, unbeaten fighters is what the sport today is missing and brings back memories of a golden age of boxing. It is very possible the result could have been the direct opposite: Khan KO 1 Prescott. In that case, the fight would have been deemed a great match. It is the unpredictable nature of boxing that makes it so appealing and exciting.

MIKE GALLIMORE
Stoke-on-Kent, England

Sibling Rivalry

Too bad you limited your brother acts to the last 30 years in the November 2008 issue ("Klitschko vs. Klitschko: The Biggest Heavyweight Fight That Will Never Happen"), because a match between heavyweights Max Baer and Buddy Baer would have topped them all. They were a pair of hard-hitting, yet technically limited brothers, short on fancy footwork but adept at hurting people. I don't think the fight would have lasted two rounds—either way—but what a two-round fight that would have been.

J RUSSELL PELTZ
Philadelphia, PA ■

[Looking Ahead]

By Eric Raskin

Holt-Torres III: No Ifs, Ands, Or Headbutts

The first two fights between junior welterweights **Kendall Holt** and **Ricardo Torres** had very little in common, other than these three things: spectacular action, knockout endings, and controversial finishes.

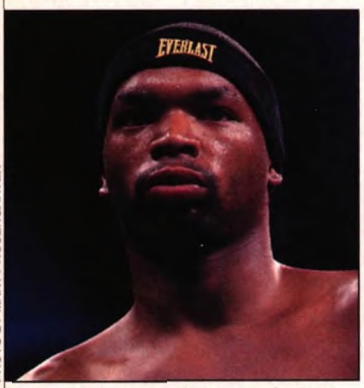


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Holt: Third fight with Torres on tap

In the first fight, on September 1, 2007, in Barranquilla, Colombia, Holt had to avoid both Torres' punches and beer cans hurled into the ring by rowdy fans, and Torres ultimately won in the 11th round on what was arguably a premature stoppage. In the rematch on July 5, 2008, in Las Vegas, Torres decked Holt twice in the first 30 seconds, but, with the help of an accidental clash of heads that softened up Torres, Holt scored a highlight-reel kayo in just 61 pulsating seconds.

On December 13, with Showtime televising, they'll do it again, this time on Jersey boy Holt's turf, Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City. Hopefully, the score will be settled without the loser having anything controversial to gripe about. And, hopefully, the fight will be as thrilling as the first two.

To a large degree, that will come down to whether the more versatile Holt chooses to box or brawl.

"You know what? Sometimes I can't predict what I'll do," Holt told THE RING. "Obviously, I want to box. But if I have to fight, then I have to fight. But what Ricardo Torres is starting to realize is that I hit just as hard as he does. Just because I box more doesn't mean I don't hit hard. In both fights, I took his best punch and I got up. He couldn't get up from my best shot."

Holt said he learned from the mistakes he made in the early moments of their second fight, but that if he had it to do over, he wouldn't change a thing.

"Those first couple knockdowns were my fault, I stood up straight with him instead of using my slickness," Holt said. "I didn't do what I was supposed to, but I'm glad the fans and everyone in boxing got their money's worth. The fans got a 12-round championship fight, with all the toppings, in one minute. What else could you ask for?"

Although surely neither Holt not Torres is looking past his rival, there is talk already of the winner facing Tim-othy Bradley next in an alphabet unification bout.

That sounds just fine to Holt, but it isn't his first choice.

"I definitely want the [Ricky] Hatton-[Paulie] Malignaggi winner," he said. "Hatton's looked at as the king of the division, and because I'm second best right now, I guess I'm the prince of the division. I'd definitely like to be the king of the division. So if that fight was an option before Timothy Bradley, I'd take that fight before Timothy Bradley."

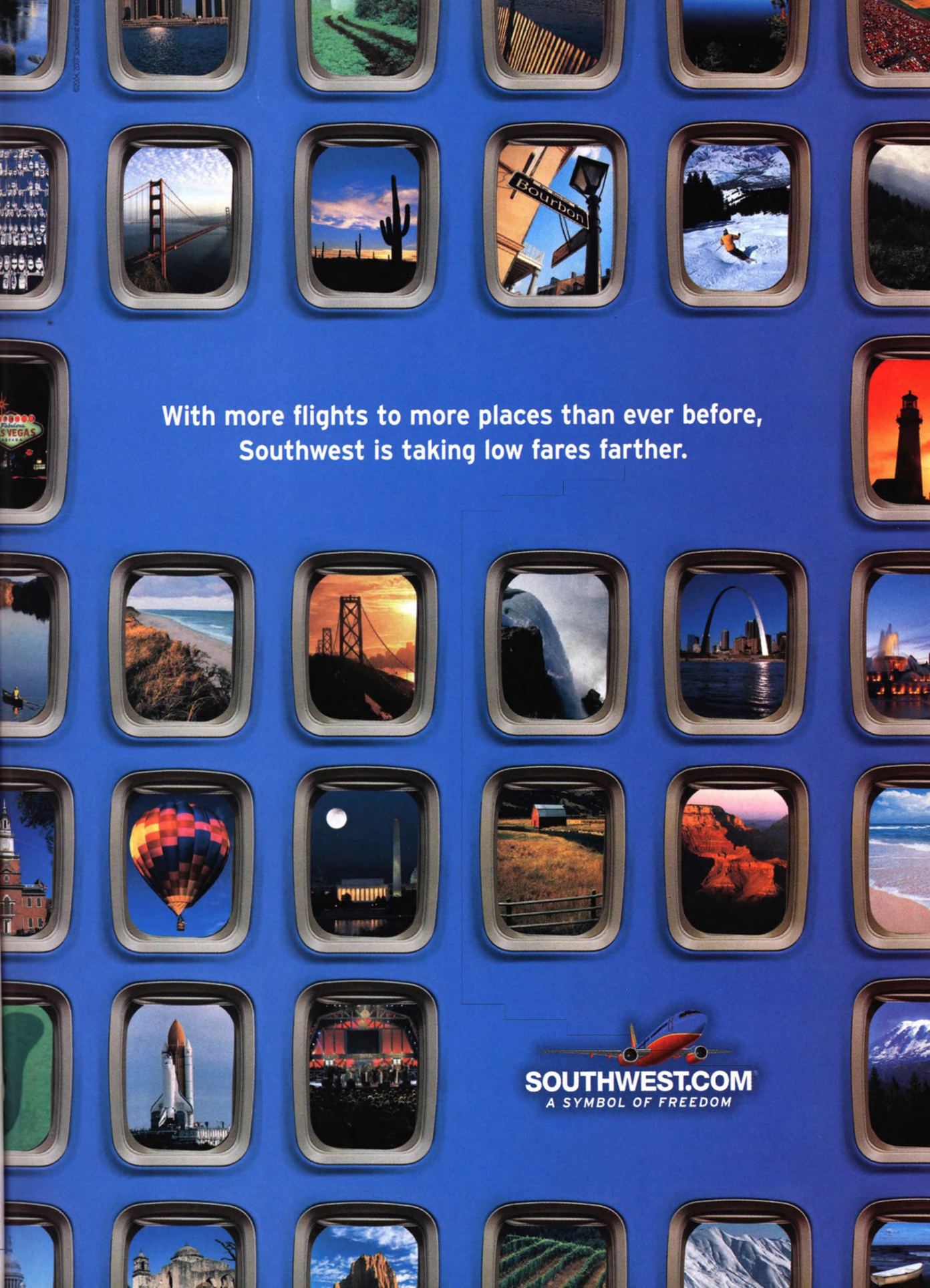
We'd take any of those fights—they're all quality matchups among the best fighters at 140 pounds. But we'll gladly start with Holt-Torres III. If their first two rumbles are any indication, something is going to happen on December 13 that leaves the boxing world buzzing.

Listen Up

It was a fine eight-year run, but ESPN2 has cancelled its seasonal midweek boxing series, which was called *Tuesday Night Fights* for six years and *Wednesday Night Fights* for the last two (we hope you can infer why the name changed). The budget is tightening at ESPN and *WNF* was among the casualties, but thankfully, *Friday Night Fights* will return for its 11th season, beginning January 9. "In 2009, *Friday Night Fights* will have increased interactive elements to engage fight fans in the telecast and increase viewer involvement in the programming," said **Doug Grassian** of ESPN Communications when asked what fans can look forward to in the New Year. "Additionally, we are planning to enhance our online presence along with staying committed to the news and informational aspect of the show." None of the matchups for the new season had been finalized as of press time ... **Kelly Pavlik**'s alphabet mandatory against **Marco Antonio Rubio**, which HBO hadn't expressed much interest in prior to Pavlik's one-sided loss to **Bernard Hopkins**, now appears to have the go-ahead. HBO and Pavlik promoter Top Rank were looking at January and February dates as we went to press ... For all of you fans of the first season of *The Contender*, two of the more memorable competitors from the then-NBC-televised show, **Joey Gilbert** and **Jesse Brinkley**, are set to square off on January 30. ■

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Rubio: Penciled in for shot at Pavlik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CARD SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended October 27, 2008

Heavyweights: Vitali Klitschko makes a big return, re-entering the ratings at two after his lopsided victory over previous number-two contender Sam Peter, who plummets to seven. The shakeup forces down Oleg Maskaev (seventh last issue) to eight and John Ruiz (ninth last issue) to 10. Juan Carlos Gomez debuts at nine after vanquishing Vladimir Virchis (eighth last issue), who departs along with Chris Arreola (10th last issue).

Cruiserweights: Guillermo Jones returns to the ratings at five after beating Firat Arslan (fifth last issue), who drops to seven. Jones' inclusion drops everyone rated seven through nine down one slot, forcing out Rudolf Kraj (10th last issue).

Light Heavyweights: Chad Dawson (third last issue) leaps to two after beating Antonio Tarver (second last issue), who drops to four. Dawson's victory also helped Glen Johnson, who jumps from four to three.

Super Middleweights: Joe Calzaghe has alerted THE RING that he is stepping down as champion to campaign exclusively at light heavyweight. Lucian Bute (third last issue) and Librado Andrade (fourth last issue) move up one place each after their spirited battle, dropping Anthony Mundine (second last issue) to four.

Middleweights: Two switches: David Lopez (seventh last issue) moves up one spot, trading places with Javier Castillejo (sixth last issue); while Marco Antonio Rubio (10th last issue) moves to nine, changing places with Buddy McGirt Jr. (ninth last issue).

Junior Middleweights: Sergio Martinez enters at six, replacing Alex Bunema (sixth last issue), who departs after being stopped in eight by Martinez.

Welterweights: No changes.

Junior Welterweights: No changes.

Lightweights: No changes.

Junior Lightweights: No changes.

Featherweights: Steve Luevano (third last issue) moves up to two, switching with Jorge Solis (second last issue). Jorge Linares (fifth last issue) replaces Hiroyuki Enoki (fourth last issue), who drops to five. Oscar Larios returns to the ratings at eight after beating Takahiro Aoh (eight last issue), who falls to nine. Cristobal Cruz enters the ratings at 10, replacing Choi Tseveenpurev, who departs.

Junior Featherweights: No changes.

Bantamweights: No changes.

Junior Bantamweights: No changes.

Flyweights: No changes.

Junior Flyweights: Ranked seven last issue, Daniel Reyes' switch to strawweight moves everyone from eight through 10 up one place and enables Rayonta Whitfield to debut at 10.

Strawweights: Daniel Reyes drops from junior flyweight to enter strawweight at 10. Reyes' inclusion forces out Juan Palacios from 10.

Pound-for-pound: Kelly Pavlik (seventh last issue) drops out after losing a one-sided fight to Bernard Hopkins. Pavlik's departure moves up Cristian Mijares (eight last issue), Rafael Marquez (ninth last issue), and Miguel Cotto (10th last issue) one place each, while Ivan Calderon returns to the pound-for-pound list at 10.

The RING
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Pound-For-Pound

1. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Lightweight
2. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Lightweight
3. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Light Heavyweight
4. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
5. **Israel Vazquez**
   Junior Featherweight
6. **Antonio Margarito**
   Welterweight
7. **Cristian Mijares**
   Junior Bantamweight
8. **Rafael Marquez**
   Junior Featherweight
9. **Miguel Cotto**
   Welterweight
10. **Ivan Calderon**
    Junior Flyweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **TheRing-online.com**